A NATURAL HISTORY of FAIRIES

Emily Hawkins

Jessica Roux

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A NATURAL HISTORY OF FAIRIES

From the notebook of
Professor Elsie Arbour

Compiled by Emily Hawkins
Illustrated by Jessica Roux

Frances Lincoln
Children's Books

A Note From the Publisher:

The original edition of this book, a volume dating from the 1920s, was discovered in the archives of the British Museum of Natural History, in a folder labelled ‘Unverified’. Although the publisher has made efforts to track down Professor Elsie Arbour, no trace has been found of her. For this reason, the publisher cannot confirm the authenticity of the book’s contents, so presents it merely as an item of interest. Readers who are keen to find out whether fairies really exist are advised to carry out their own investigations.

My spectacles keep disappearing then reappearing in the most peculiar places. One might almost think a mischievous brownie was playing tricks on me...

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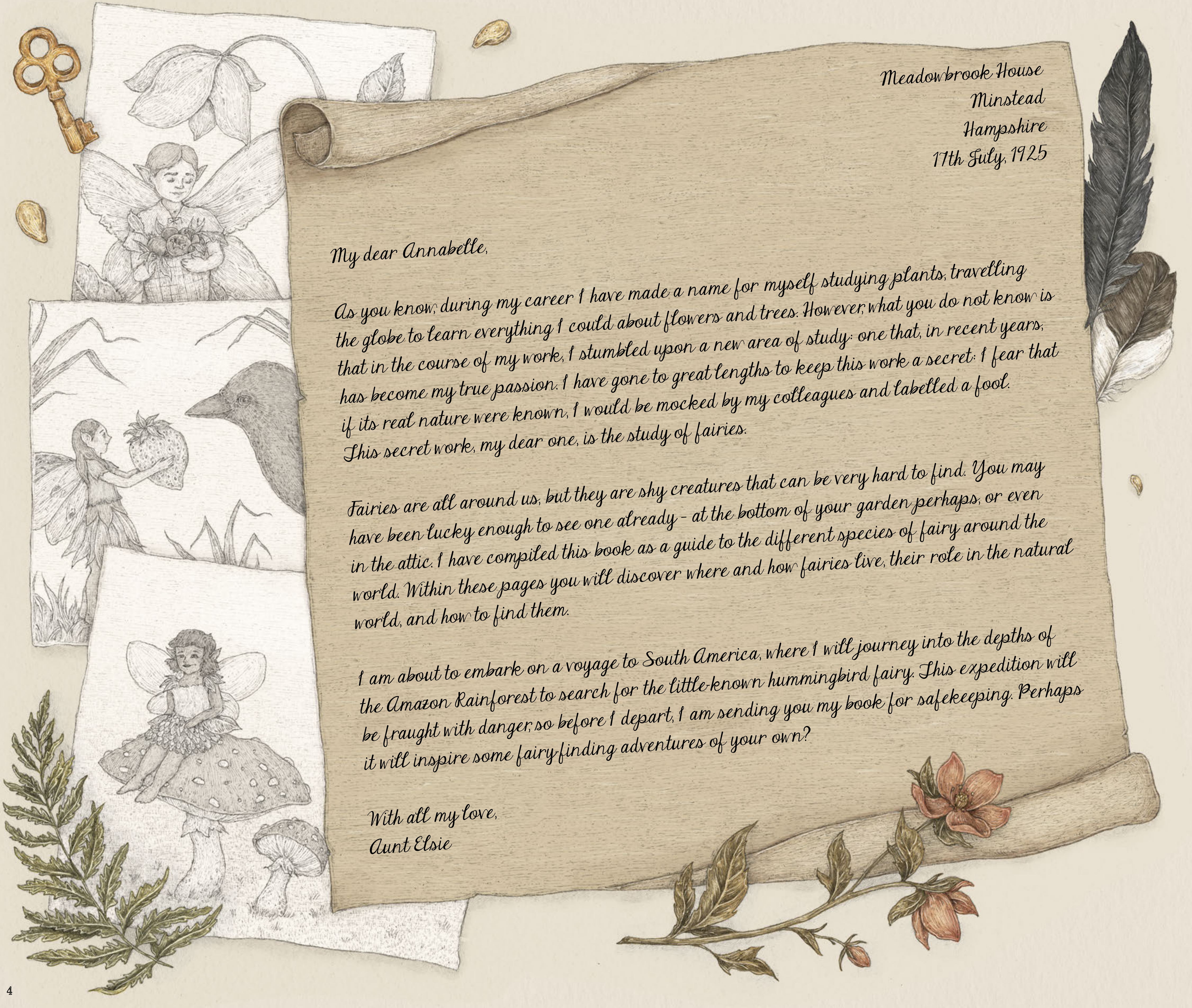


Meadowbrook House
Minstead
Hampshire
17th July, 1925

My dear Annabelle,

As you know, during my career I have made a name for myself studying plants, travelling the globe to learn everything I could about flowers and trees. However, what you do not know is that in the course of my work, I stumbled upon a new area of study: one that, in recent years, has become my true passion. I have gone to great lengths to keep this work a secret: I fear that if its real nature were known, I would be mocked by my colleagues and labelled a fool. This secret work, my dear one, is the study of fairies.

Fairies are all around us, but they are shy creatures that can be very hard to find. You may have been lucky enough to see one already – at the bottom of your garden perhaps, or even in the attic. I have compiled this book as a guide to the different species of fairy around the world. Within these pages you will discover where and how fairies live, their role in the natural world, and how to find them.

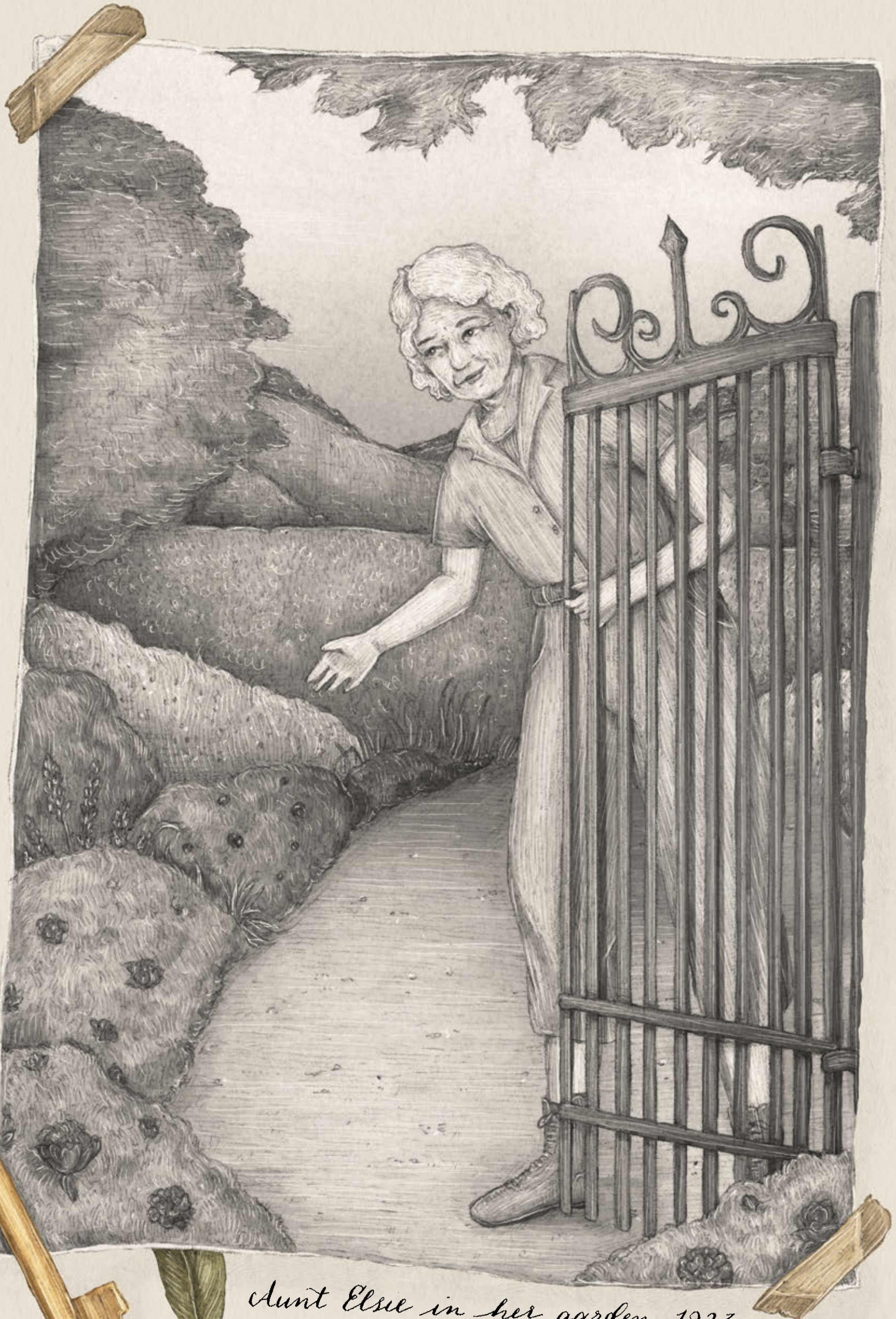
I am about to embark on a voyage to South America, where I will journey into the depths of the Amazon Rainforest to search for the little-known hummingbird fairy. This expedition will be fraught with danger, so before I depart, I am sending you my book for safekeeping. Perhaps it will inspire some fairy-finding adventures of your own?

With all my love,
Aunt Elsie

An extract from Aunt Elsie's diary:

Friday, June 28, 1895

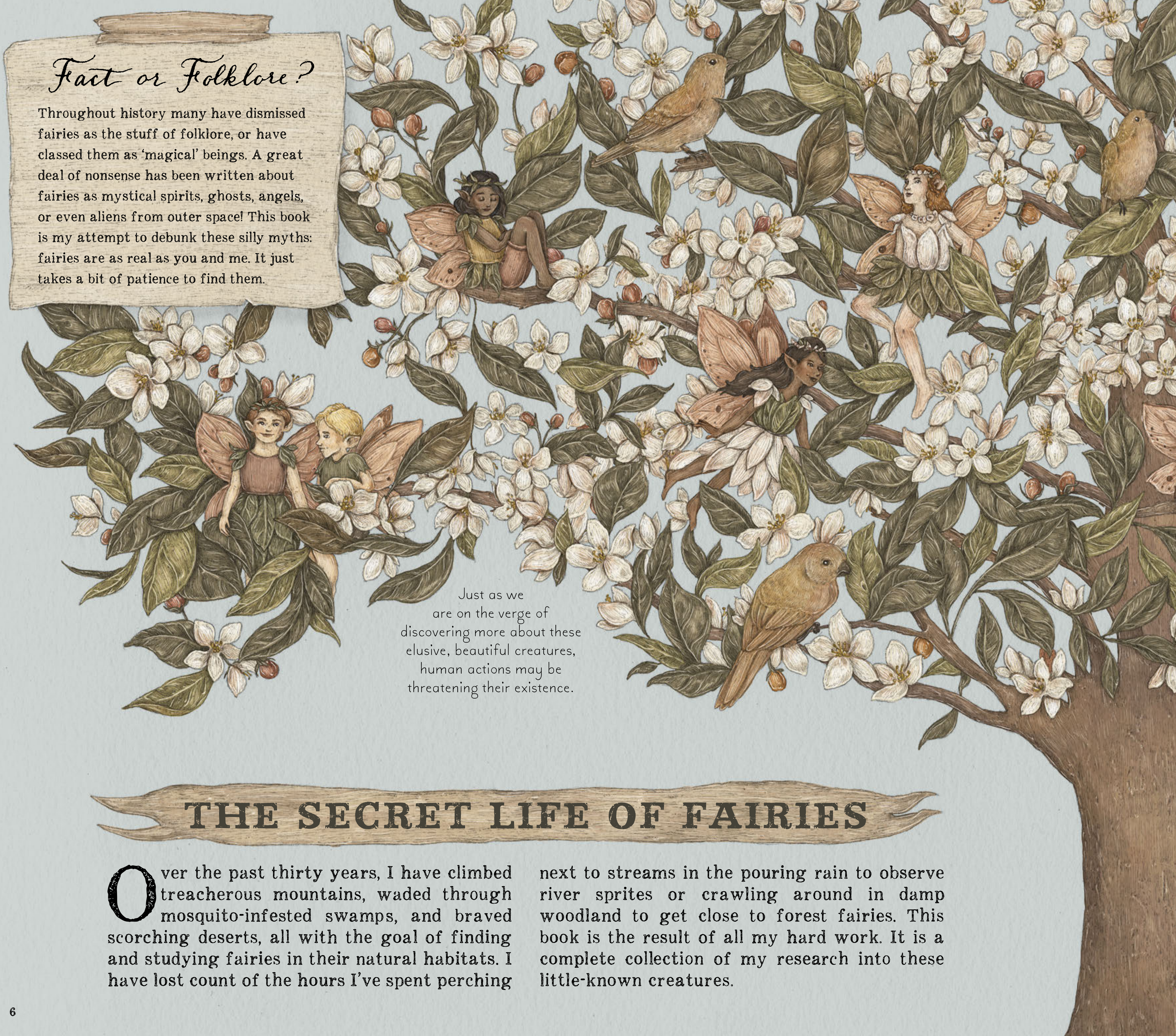
What a peculiar day. As I was pottering in the garden after lunch, I heard snatches of tinkling laughter. They were coming from the greenhouse. Slowly and quietly, I tiptoed to the doorway, and stopped on the threshold. The laughter came again, very clearly this time. And then, to my amazement, a tiny winged creature, human-like in form, fluttered out from among my tomato plants, and looked me square in the eye. I can't describe it as anything else but a fairy!



Aunt Elsie in her garden, 1923

Fact or Folklore?

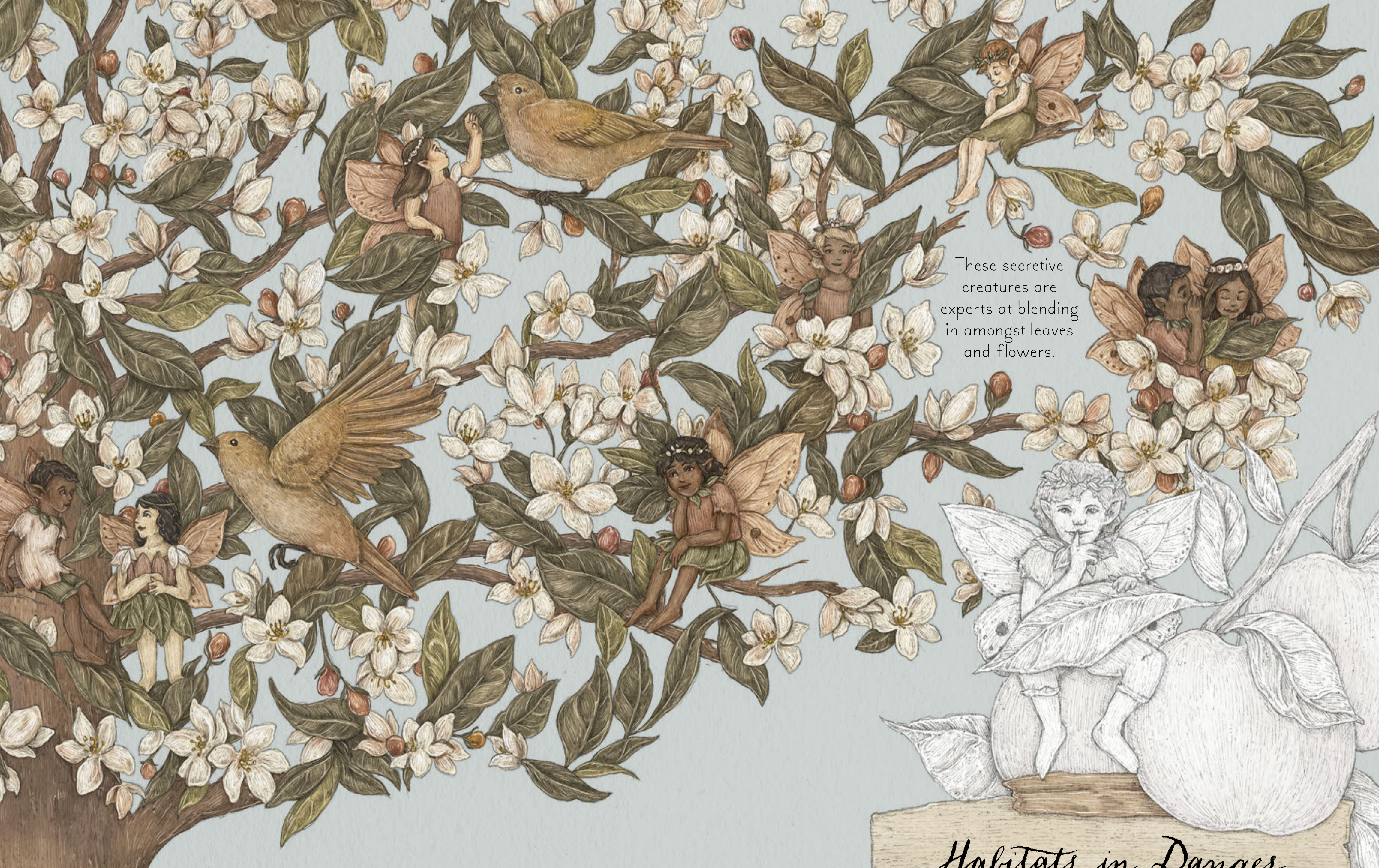
Throughout history many have dismissed fairies as the stuff of folklore, or have classed them as 'magical' beings. A great deal of nonsense has been written about fairies as mystical spirits, ghosts, angels, or even aliens from outer space! This book is my attempt to debunk these silly myths: fairies are as real as you and me. It just takes a bit of patience to find them.



Just as we are on the verge of discovering more about these elusive, beautiful creatures, human actions may be threatening their existence.

THE SECRET LIFE OF FAIRIES

Over the past thirty years, I have climbed treacherous mountains, waded through mosquito-infested swamps, and braved scorching deserts, all with the goal of finding and studying fairies in their natural habitats. I have lost count of the hours I've spent perching next to streams in the pouring rain to observe river sprites or crawling around in damp woodland to get close to forest fairies. This book is the result of all my hard work. It is a complete collection of my research into these little-known creatures.



These secretive creatures are experts at blending in amongst leaves and flowers.

Keeping an Open Mind

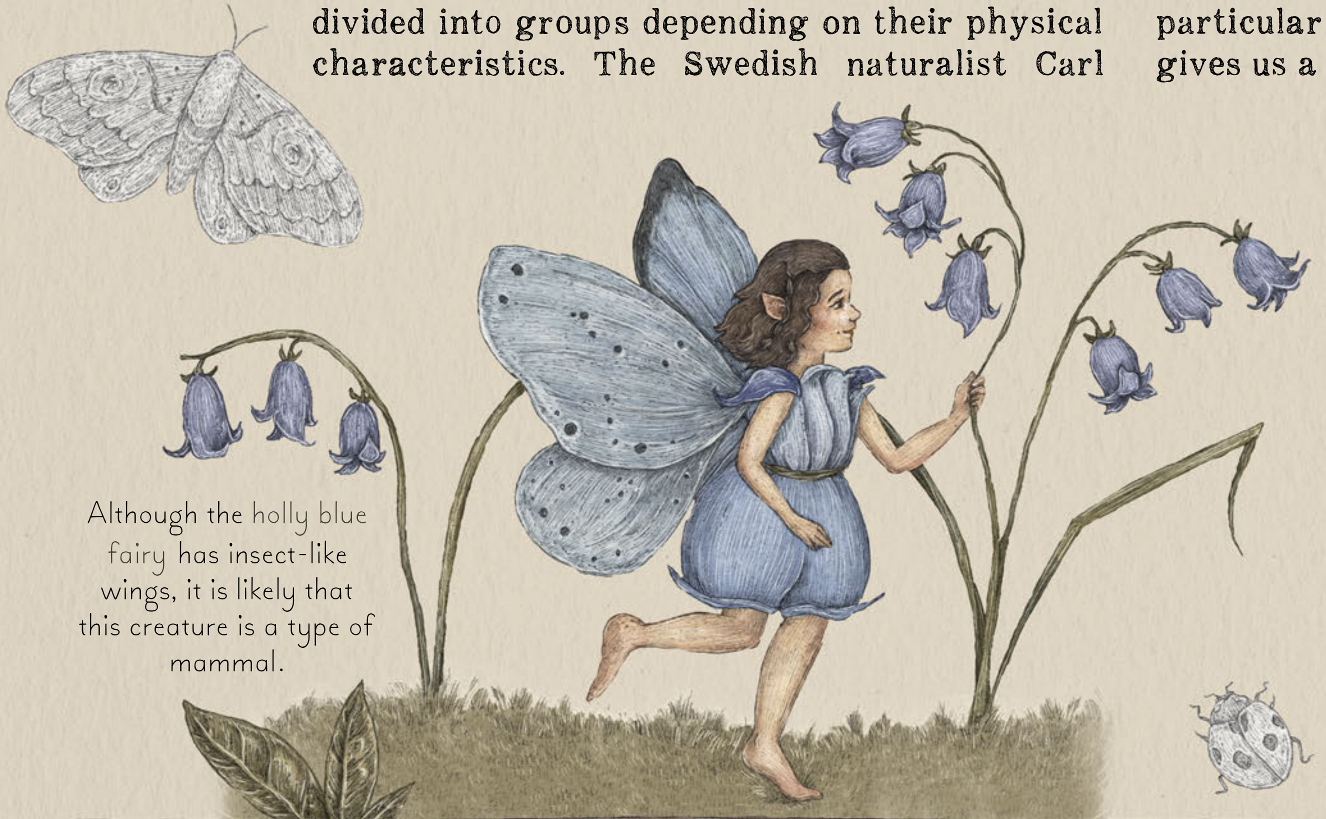
Until now, there has been very little scientific research into the lives of fairies. This is largely because fairies can be extremely difficult to track down due to their secretive nature and impressive means of camouflage. However, this doesn't mean they are not real. Take for example the giant squid: this bizarre-looking sea creature was thought to be a myth, until one day in 1861 pieces of it were brought ashore by a French naval ship. We have discovered thousands of species of animal on our planet, with new ones being identified all the time. My point is this: just because science hasn't discovered the wondrous world of fluttering fairies yet, doesn't mean they don't exist…

Habitats in Danger

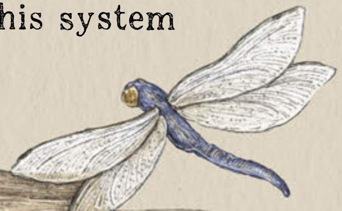
During the course of my research, I have witnessed some heartbreaking scenes. In some places, human actions are putting fairies' habitats at risk. When forests and woodland are cut down to make space for farm land or to provide timber for building, then fairies' homes are destroyed. When sewage is pumped into a river, then the dwellings of water fairies become polluted. When fairies are forced to breathe in the fumes from factories or motorcars, then their health suffers. It is vital that we learn as much as we can about fairies so that we can protect them and their precious habitats.

WHAT ARE FAIRIES?

Before we start looking at fairies in detail, we must first explore exactly what these creatures are. All living things can be divided into groups depending on their physical characteristics. The Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus introduced this way of grouping plants and animals in the 1700s. Sometimes a newly discovered creature may not fit neatly into a particular category – but at least this system gives us a useful place to start!



Although the holly blue fairy has insect-like wings, it is likely that this creature is a type of mammal.



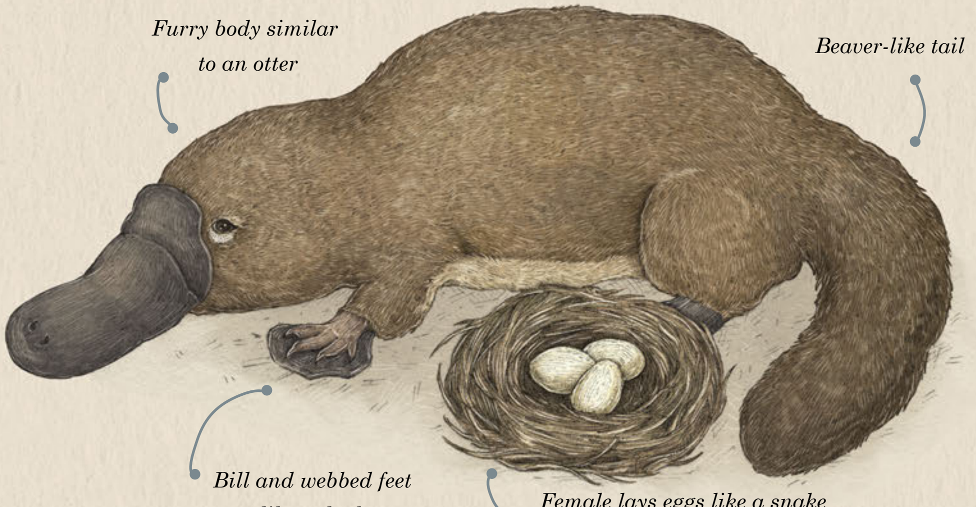
Insects or Mammals?

At first it may seem difficult to class fairies in an existing animal group. They have wings and lay eggs, which might suggest they are insects. But their bodies are very similar to humans', which could mean that they are, in fact, a type of mammal (a warm-blooded creature with a backbone that feeds milk to its young). After much research I would propose that fairies fall naturally into this category: they are mammals.

The Platypus Puzzle

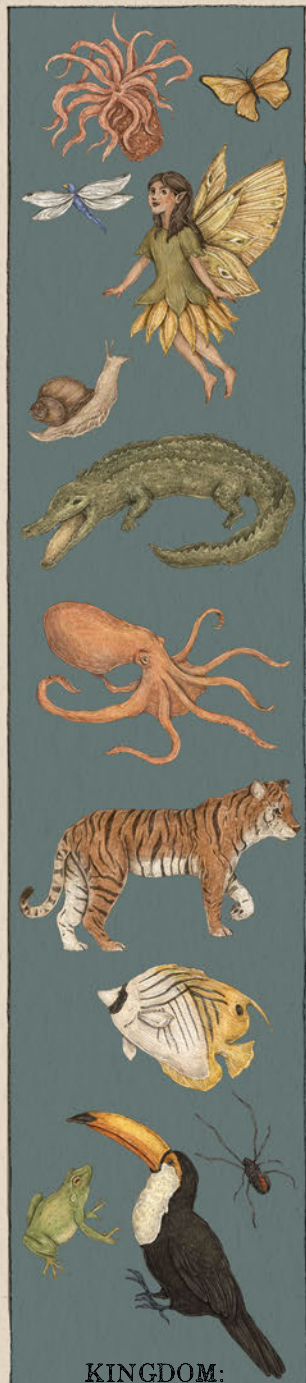
Some might argue that the reason fairies are difficult to classify is because they don't exist. But how wrong they are! Consider the platypus. When this creature was first sent to Europe from Australia in the late 1790s, many scientists refused to believe that it was real. A furry creature with the body of an otter, the tail of a beaver and the feet and beak of a duck, which lays eggs like a snake? Impossible! Was it a mammal, a bird or even a reptile? Just because the platypus is tricky to categorise doesn't mean it's not real – and the same is true of fairies.

CLASSIFICATION: MAMMAL


Furry body similar to an otter
Beaver-like tail
Bill and webbed feet like a duck
Female lays eggs like a snake but feeds her young milk

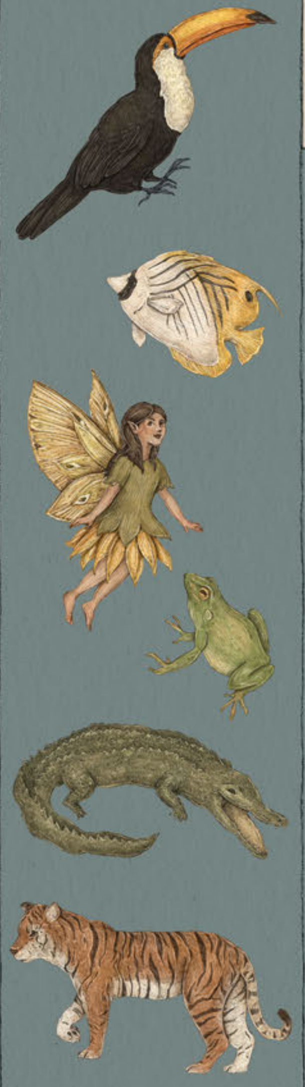
Classification of the Meadow Fairy

When scientists 'classify' a creature, they sort it into a particular group. We begin with the largest group, called a 'kingdom', and continue sorting into smaller and smaller groups until we're left with a 'species'. This chart illustrates my theories about where fairies fit in the animal kingdom. As an example, the chart shows how the **MEADOW FAIRY** is related to other creatures.



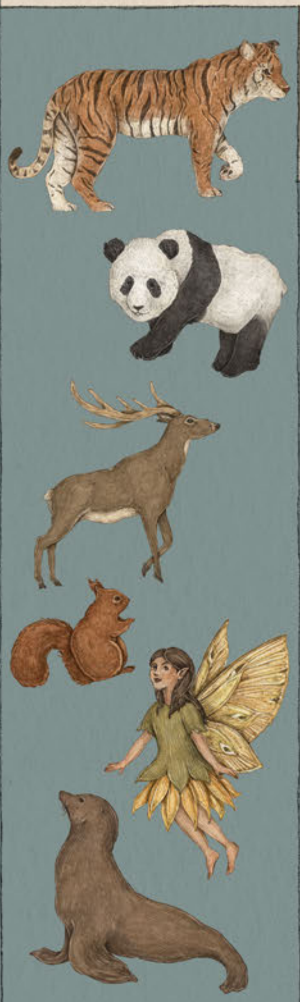
KINGDOM:
Animal

This group includes all the animals on our planet, from mammals and reptiles to birds, fish and insects.



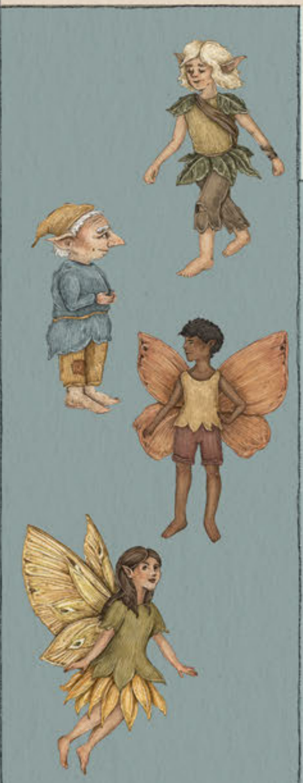
PHYLUM:
Chordates

This group contains all animals with backbones, also known as 'vertebrates'.



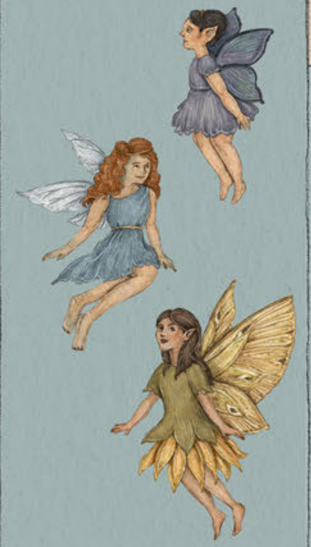
CLASS:
Mammals

Mammals are vertebrates that feed milk to their young.



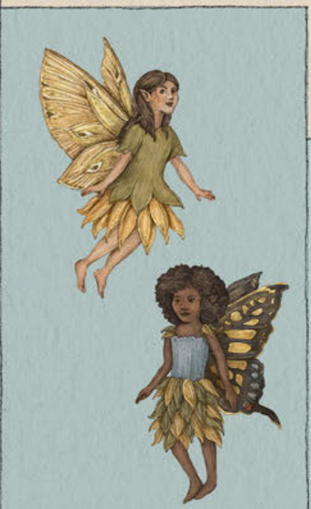
ORDER:
Fair Folk

This group contains all egg-laying mammals of tiny stature (including fairies and their wingless relatives, e.g. elves).



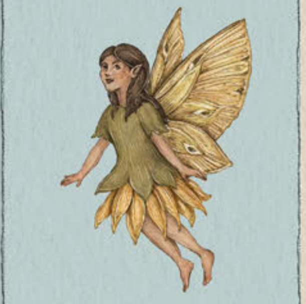
FAMILY:
Fairy

This family includes all winged fairies from various habitats, including marine fairies.



GENUS:
Nymph

This group includes all winged, non-aquatic fairies.



SPECIES:
Meadow Fairy

Finally we narrow our focus to one species: the meadow fairy, whose scientific name is *Nympha pratorum*.

THE ANATOMY OF A FAIRY

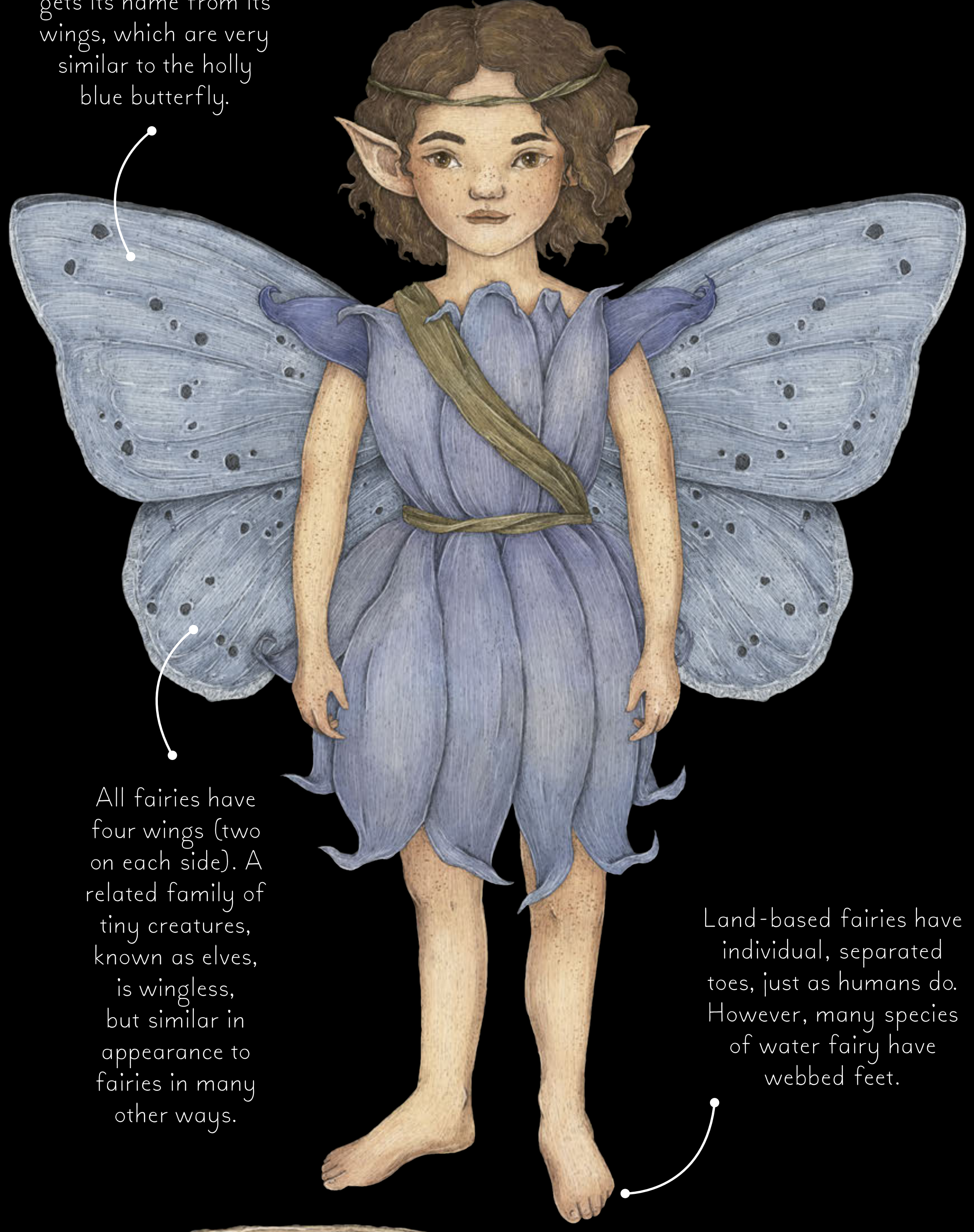
Fairies are tiny creatures – the largest measures only a few inches tall. In appearance, they are very similar to miniature human children, with one notable difference: wings. All fairies have wings, but they vary greatly between species. They may resemble butterfly wings, dragonfly wings, or even the wings of bees. This wing variation is the main characteristic that helps us identify different species of fairy.

SKELETAL STRUCTURE

The skeleton of a fairy closely resembles that of a human child, but is much, much smaller.

FAIRY WISHBONE

Another difference between human and fairy skeletons is that, while humans have two separate collarbones, called clavicles, fairies have a fused collarbone, like a bird's. This is called the wishbone. It helps strengthen the fairy's skeleton, so it can fly.



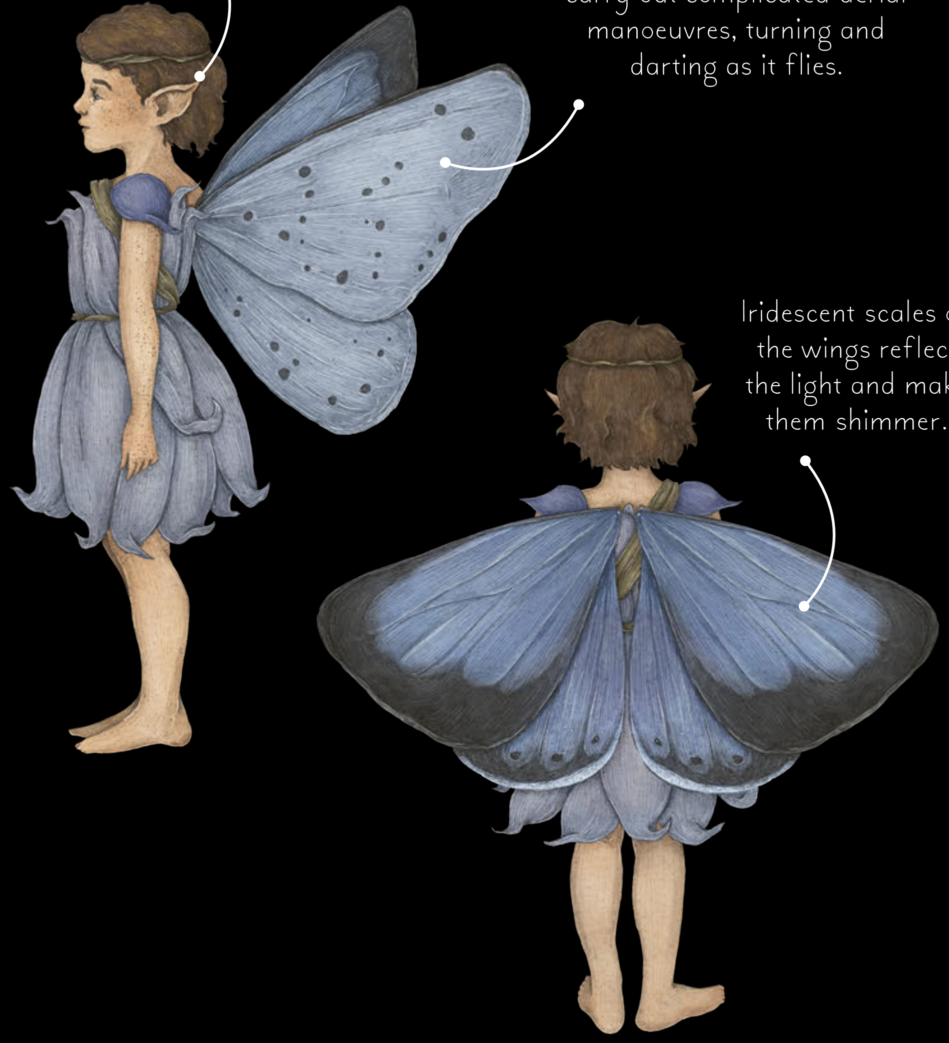
The holly blue fairy gets its name from its wings, which are very similar to the holly blue butterfly.

All fairies have four wings (two on each side). A related family of tiny creatures, known as elves, is wingless, but similar in appearance to fairies in many other ways.

Land-based fairies have individual, separated toes, just as humans do. However, many species of water fairy have webbed feet.

THE HOLLY BLUE FAIRY

(Nympha caerula)



All fairies and
elves have
pointed ears.

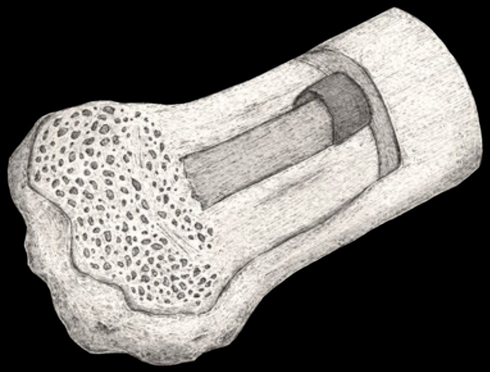
The large surface area of the wing means that the fairy can carry out complicated aerial manoeuvres, turning and darting as it flies.

Iridescent scales on the wings reflect the light and make them shimmer.

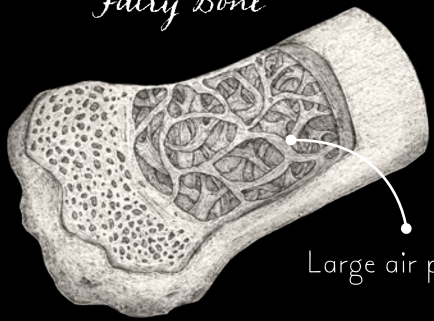
BIRDLIKE BONES

A fairy's bones are much lighter than a human's. This allows fairies to fly. Like the bones of a bird, fairy bones are hollow and are filled with a honeycomb-like substance that contains many air pockets. This means that fairies aren't very heavy, so they can take off easily.

Human Bone



Fairy Bone

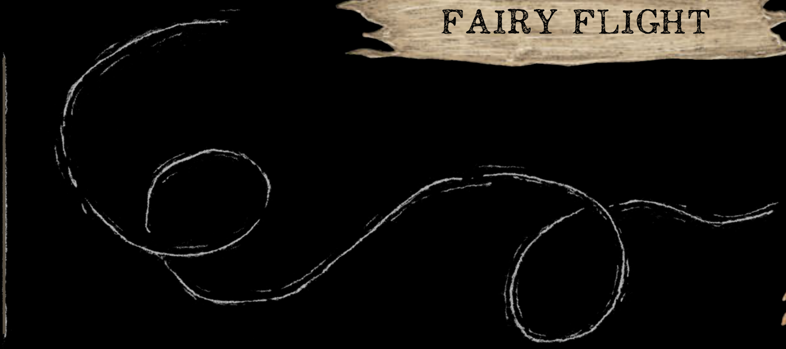


Large air pockets

FAIRY FLIGHT

Flight Muscles

Fairies have lots of small but strong muscles that help move their wings. Along with their powerful chest muscles, they have an extra set of flight muscles running down the middle of the back.



Flight Path

The flight path of a fairy often follows a jerky, fluttering pattern, similar to a butterfly's. A possible reason is that this type of flight pattern is difficult for predators to predict, allowing a fairy to evade capture and stay safe.

FAIRY WINGS

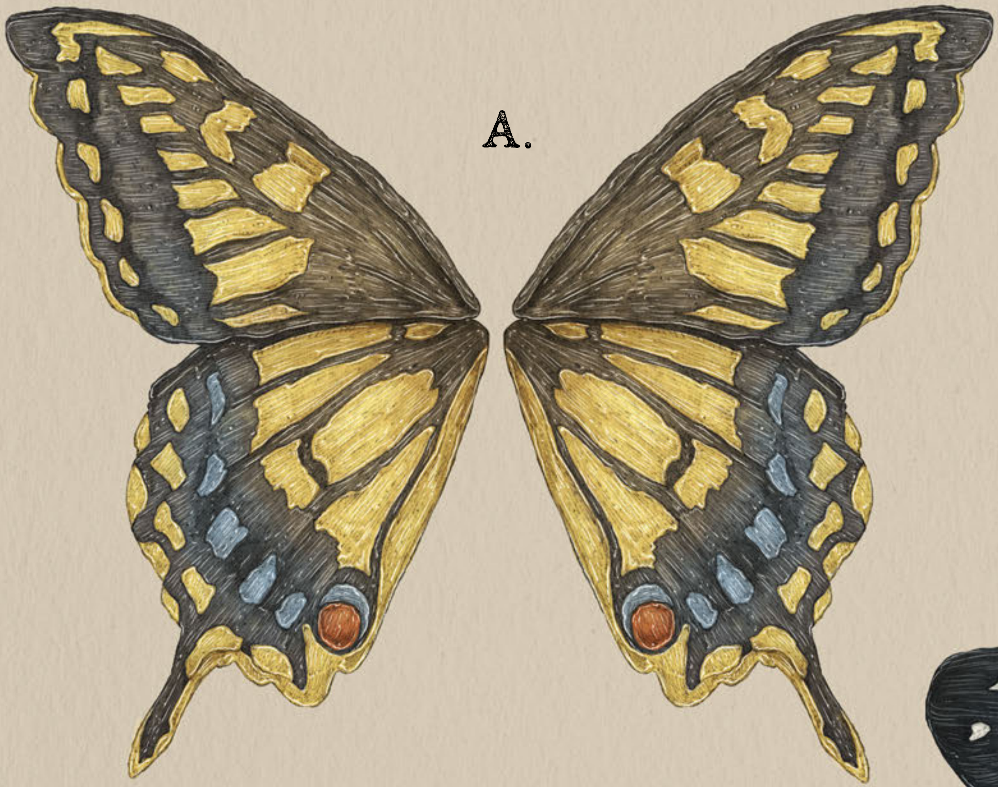
The wings of most fairies are covered in thousands of tiny scales. Together, they reflect the light to produce beautiful, shimmering colours.

A. SWALLOWTAIL FAIRY
(Nympha papilio)

F. DEW FAIRY
(Nympha aquarius)

B. PEACOCK FAIRY
(Nympha lavandula)

G. RAINFOREST NYMPH
(Nympha amazonia)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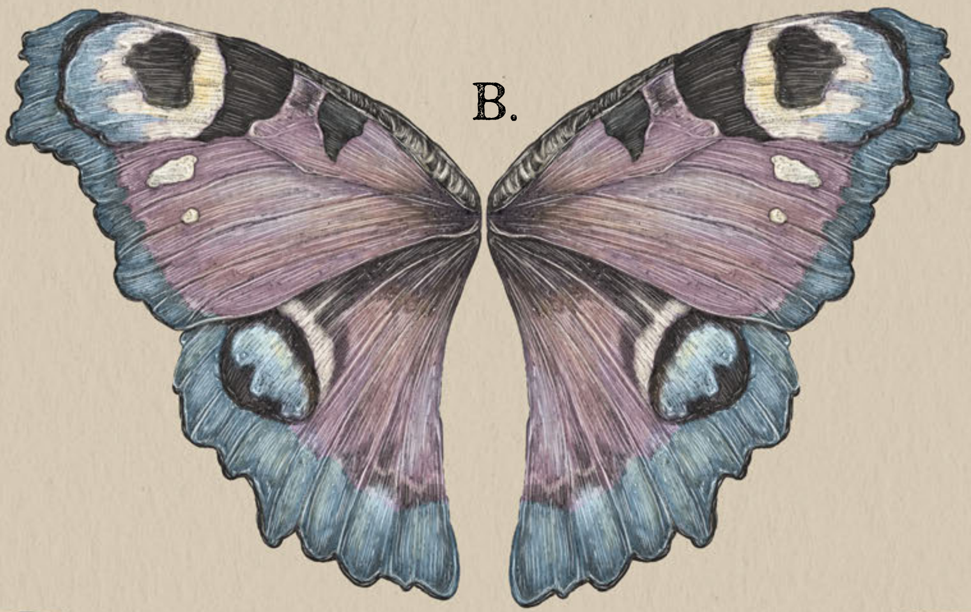
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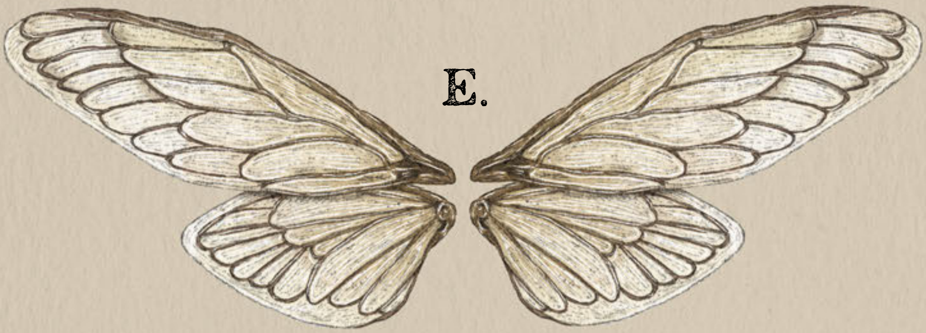
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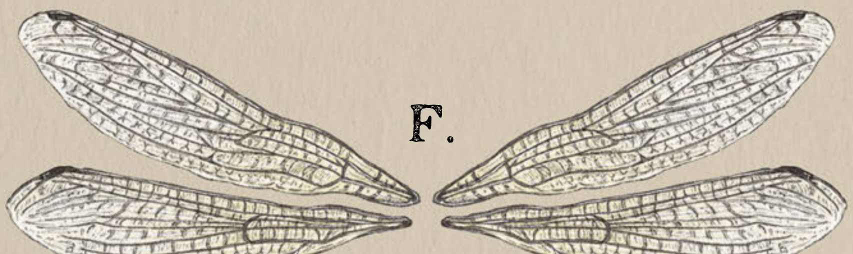
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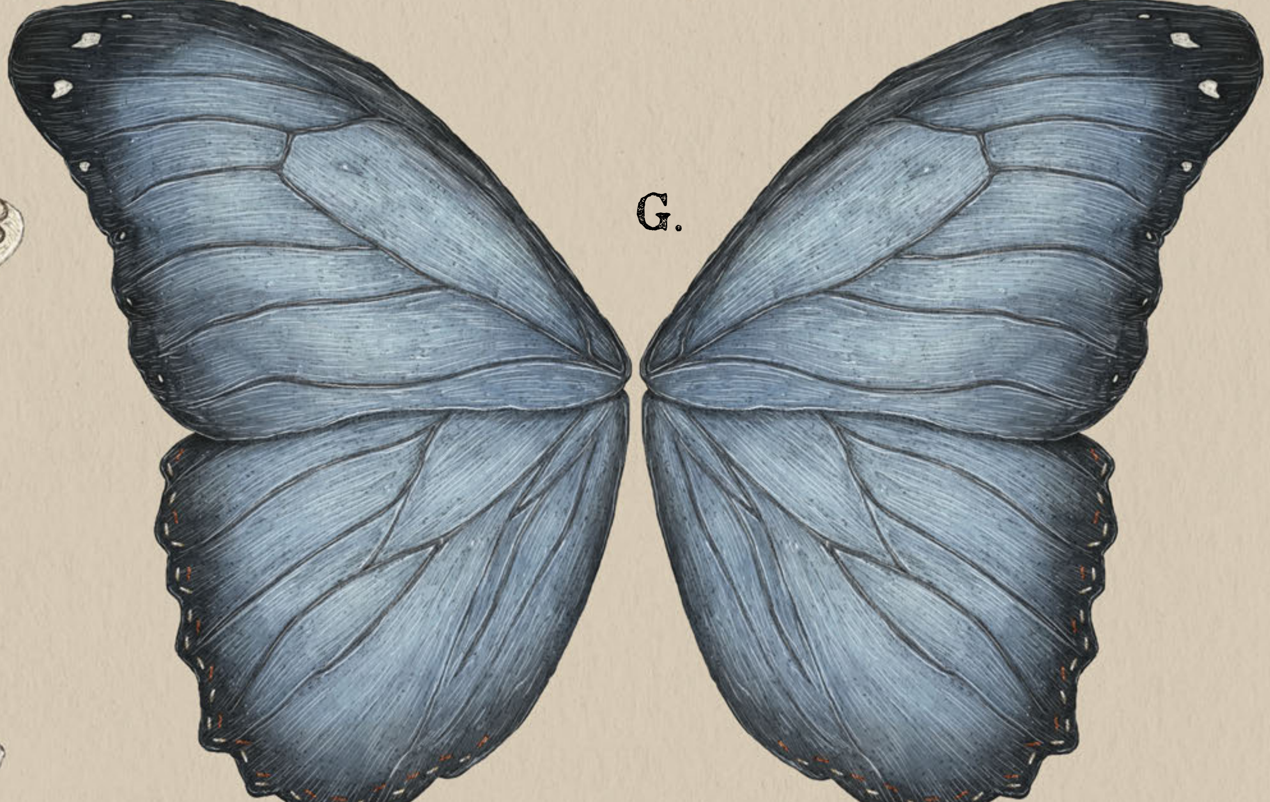

G.

C. MALACHITE FAIRY
(Nympha viridi)

D. CACTUS FAIRY
(Nympha sonora)

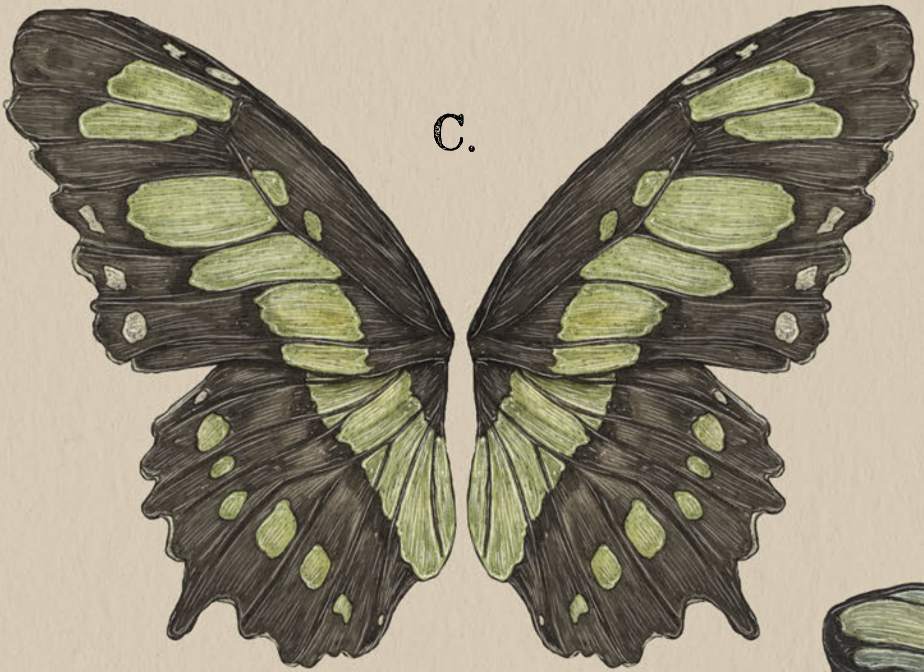
E. CANDLEMAS BELLE
(Nympha galanthus)

H. BIRCH FAIRY
(Nympha betula)

I. RIVER SPRITE
(Nympha fluminis)

J. QUEEN FAIRY
(Nympha regina)

C.



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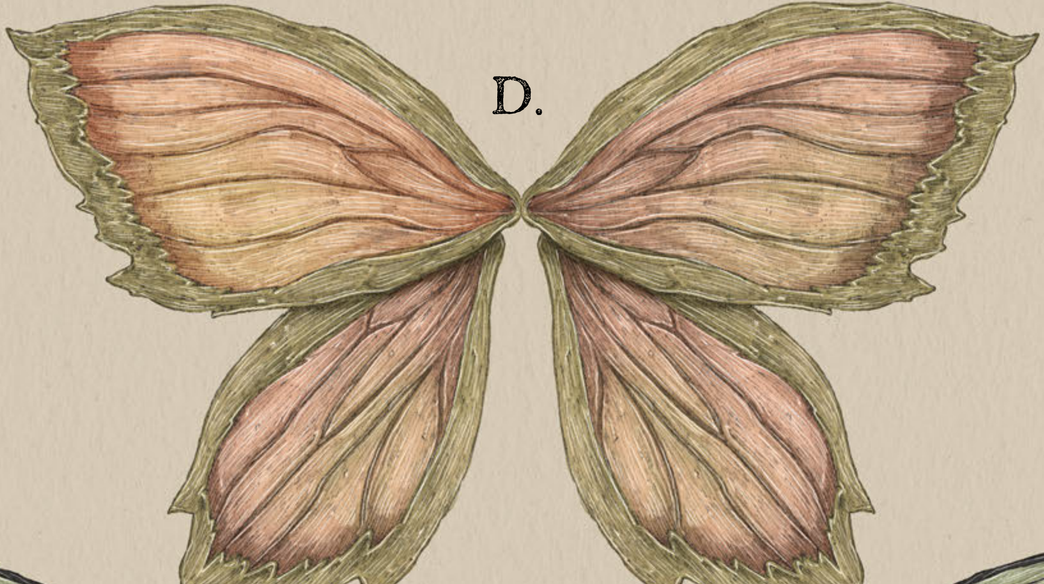

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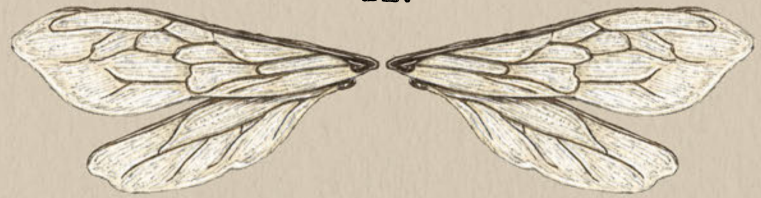

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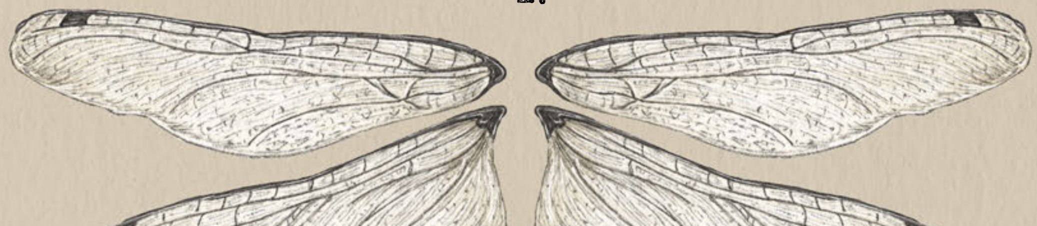

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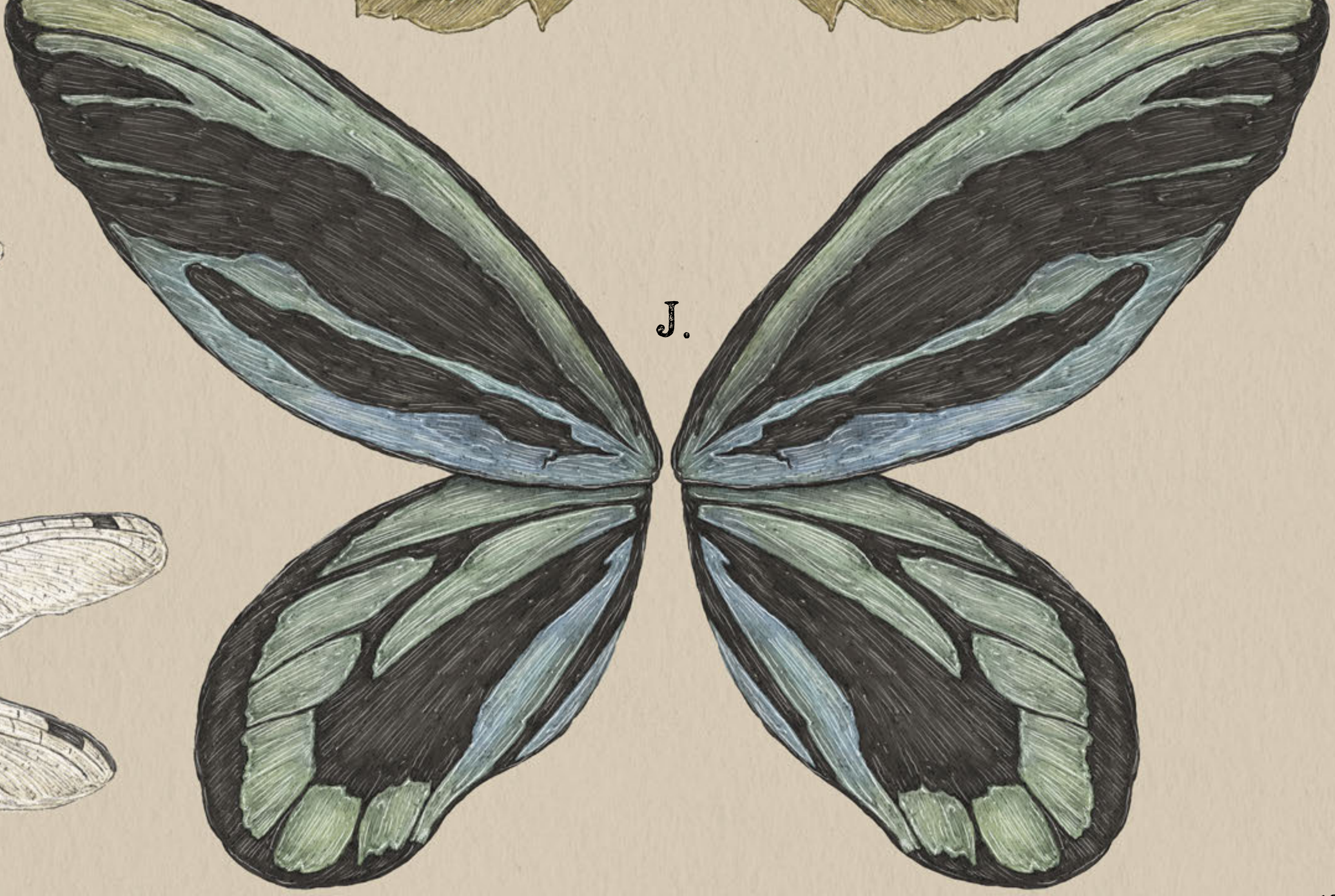
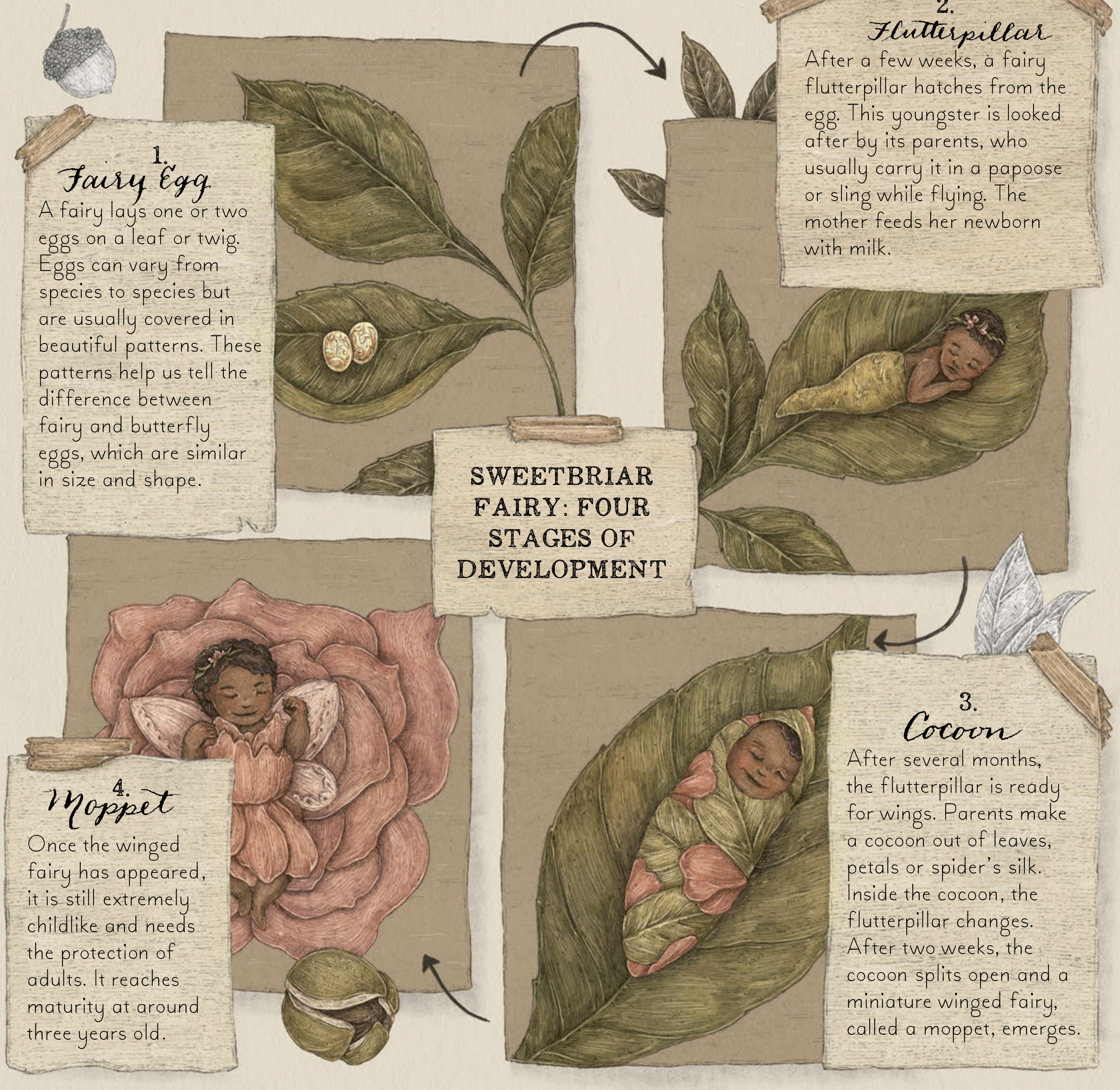


THE LIFE CYCLE OF A FAIRY

Despite what countless fairy tales tell us, fairies can't shape-shift, transforming from one creature to another. However, after much careful study, I can confirm that they do go through several surprising changes as they grow. This process of change is called 'metamorphosis'. In all my years of research, I have not managed to discover how long fairies live for. Legend has it that they live forever…



SWEETBRIAR FAIRY: FOUR STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

1.
Fairy Egg
A fairy lays one or two eggs on a leaf or twig. Eggs can vary from species to species but are usually covered in beautiful patterns. These patterns help us tell the difference between fairy and butterfly eggs, which are similar in size and shape.

2.
Flutterpillar
After a few weeks, a fairy flutterpillar hatches from the egg. This youngster is looked after by its parents, who usually carry it in a papoose or sling while flying. The mother feeds her newborn with milk.

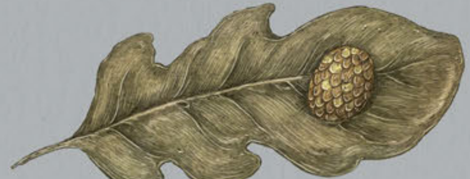
3.
Cocoon
After several months, the flutterpillar is ready for wings. Parents make a cocoon out of leaves, petals or spider's silk. Inside the cocoon, the flutterpillar changes. After two weeks, the cocoon splits open and a miniature winged fairy, called a moppet, emerges.

4.
Moppet
Once the winged fairy has appeared, it is still extremely childlike and needs the protection of adults. It reaches maturity at around three years old.

EGG IDENTIFICATION

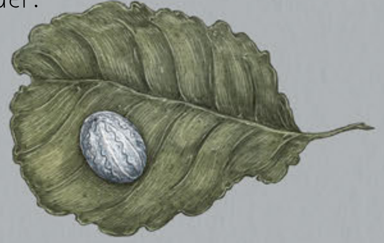
DRYAD *(Nympha quercus)*

The dryad, who lives among woods and forests, often lays her eggs on an oak leaf.



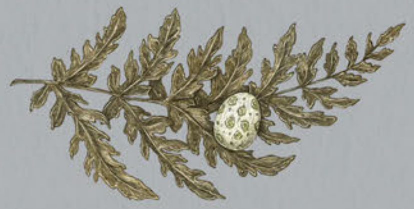
RIVER SPRITE
(Nympha fluminis)

You might spot the eggs of the river sprite on the leaves of a waterside tree, such as an alder.



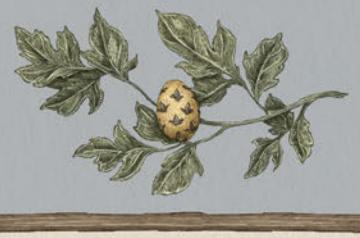
WICKLOW FAIRY
(Nympha sidhe)

This Irish fairy lays her eggs among the ferns and heather of the Wicklow Mountains.



SWALLOWTAIL FAIRY
(Nympha papilio)

The swallowtail fairy usually lays her eggs on parsley leaves, or amongst other herbs.



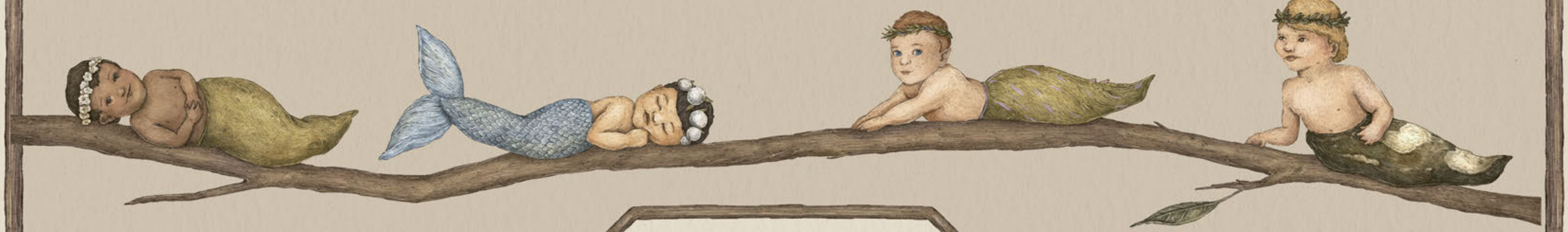
FLUTTERPILLAR IDENTIFICATION

The flutterpillar of the **DRYAD** has a greenish tail, helping it blend in among the foliage of the oak tree.

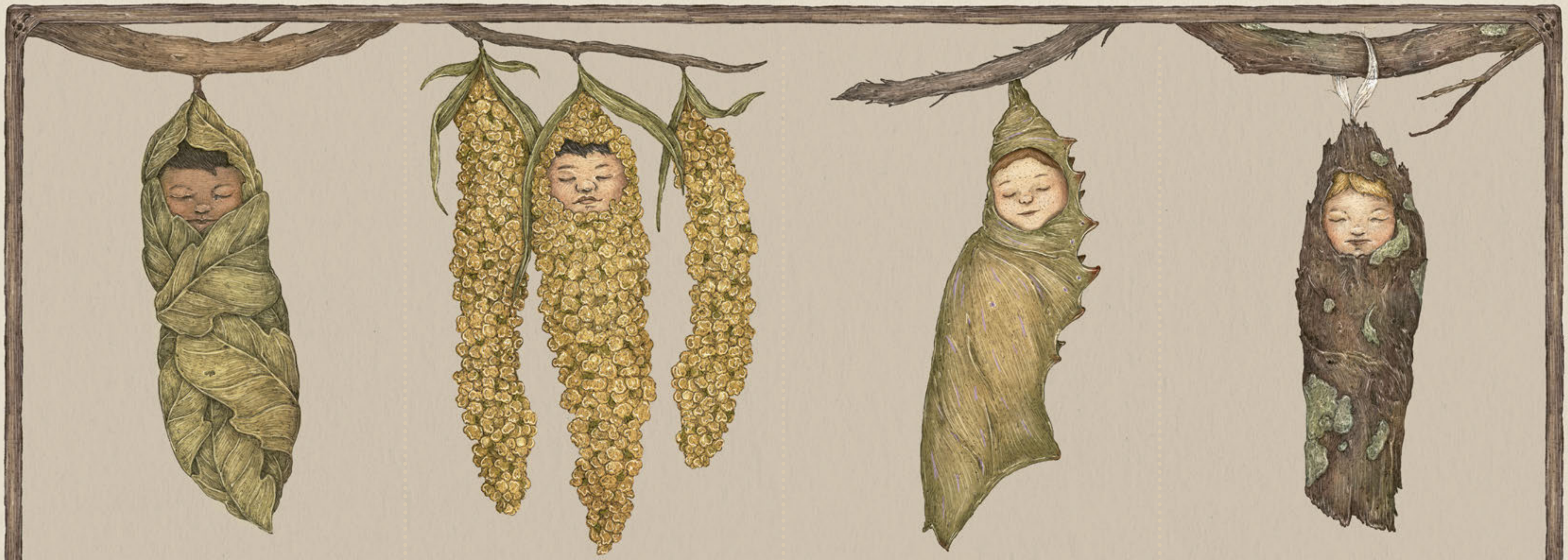
The **RIVER SPRITE** flutterpillar has a fin on its tail, presumably to help it swim back to the bank should it fall into the water from an overhanging branch.

Be careful when walking amongst heather: you might trample on the tiny flutterpillar of the **WICKLOW FAIRY,** decked out in greens and purples.

It's easy to mistake the blotchy tail of the **SWALLOWTAIL** flutterpillar for a bird's dropping! This may help disguise it from hungry birds of prey.



COCOON IDENTIFICATION

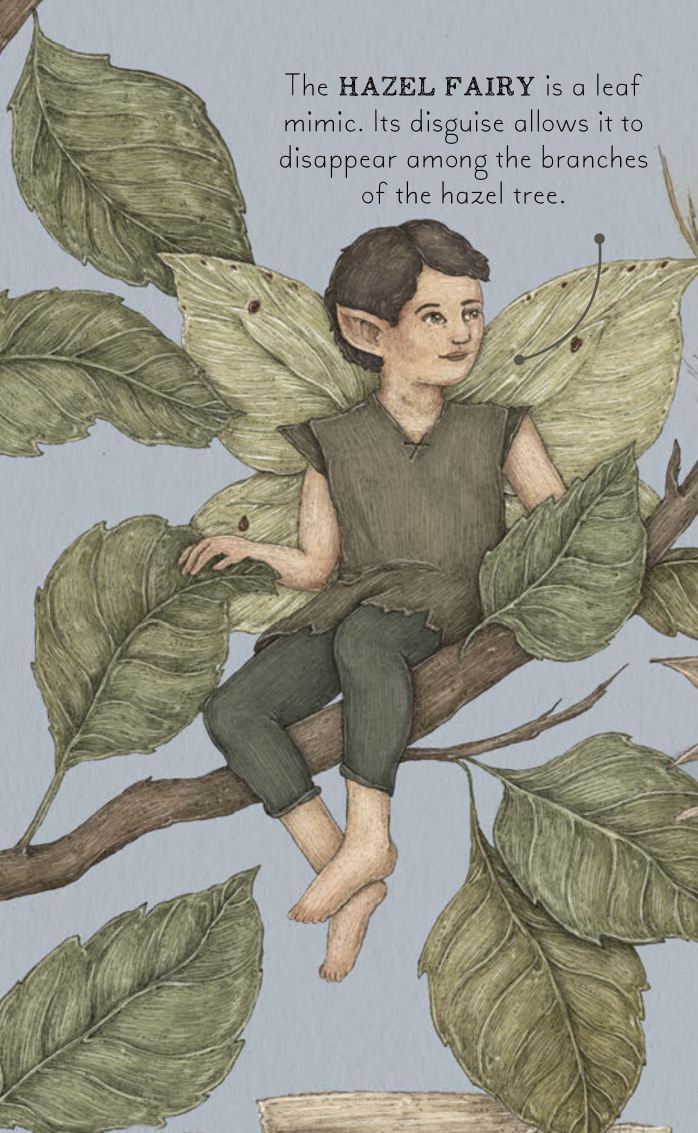


A pair of **DRYAD** fairies make a simple cocoon for their youngster from a blanket of green leaves.

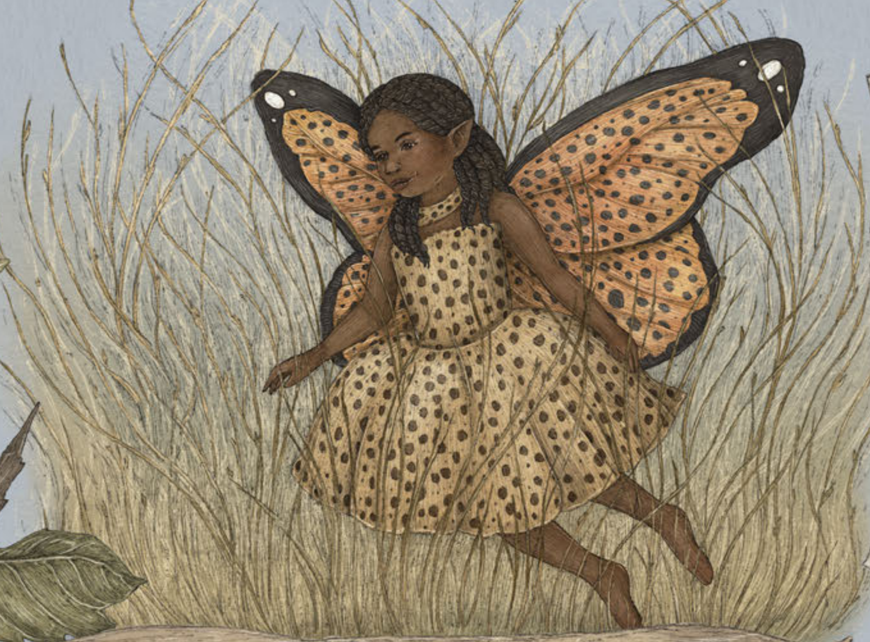
The **RIVER SPRITE** hangs its cocoon from the branch of a weeping willow tree, disguised as a catkin.

The thorny appearance of the **WICKLOW FAIRY'S** cocoon helps it blend in among the brambles.

Wrapped in dead leaves, the cocoon of a **SWALLOWTAIL** fairy is attached to a branch using fine strands of spider's silk. It looks like a twig, and stays hidden until the moppet is ready to emerge.



The **HAZEL FAIRY** is a leaf mimic. Its disguise allows it to disappear among the branches of the hazel tree.



Bold Patterns

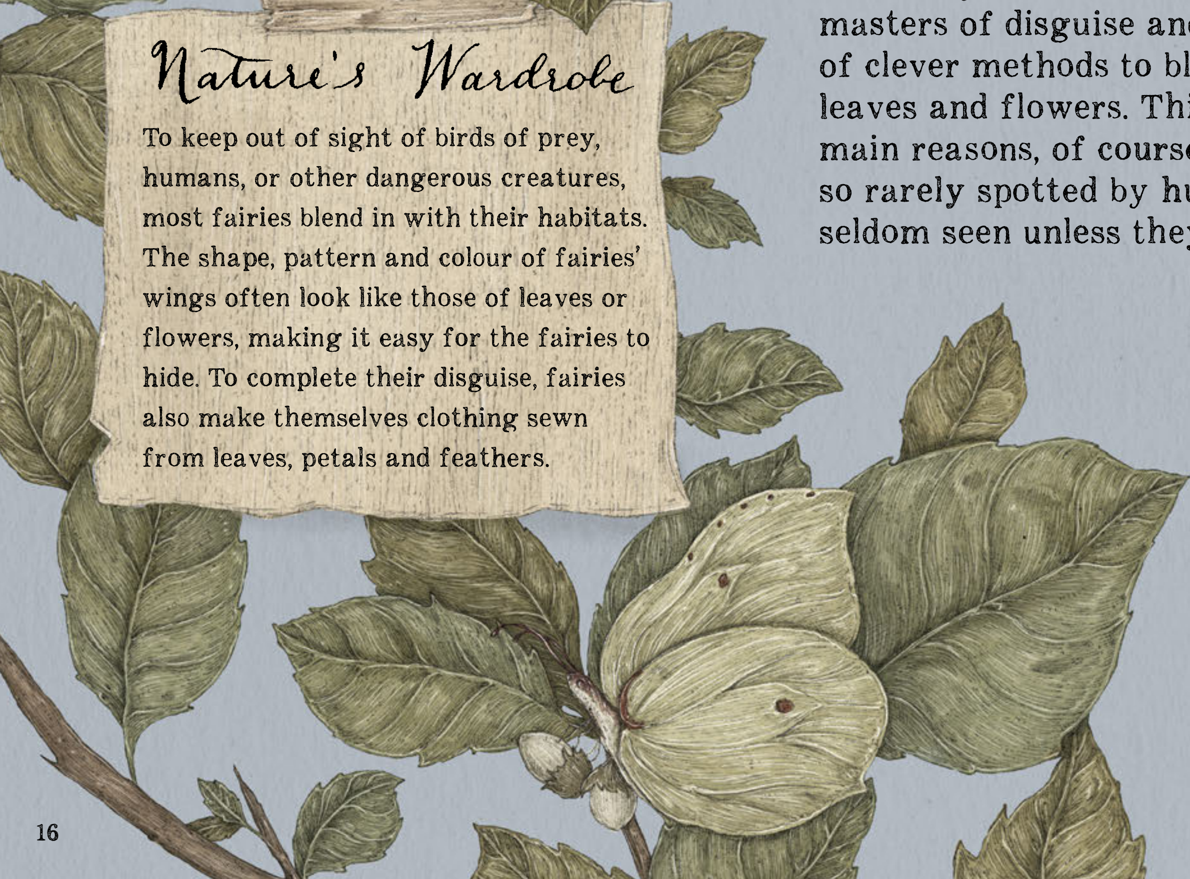
The savannah fairy, who lives among the grasslands of Africa, has bold patterns on her wings and clothing. These patches of light and dark can be confusing to the eye, meaning that the fairy's outline can be very difficult to make out. This type of camouflage helps the fairy blend in on the savannah, just like a cheetah does.

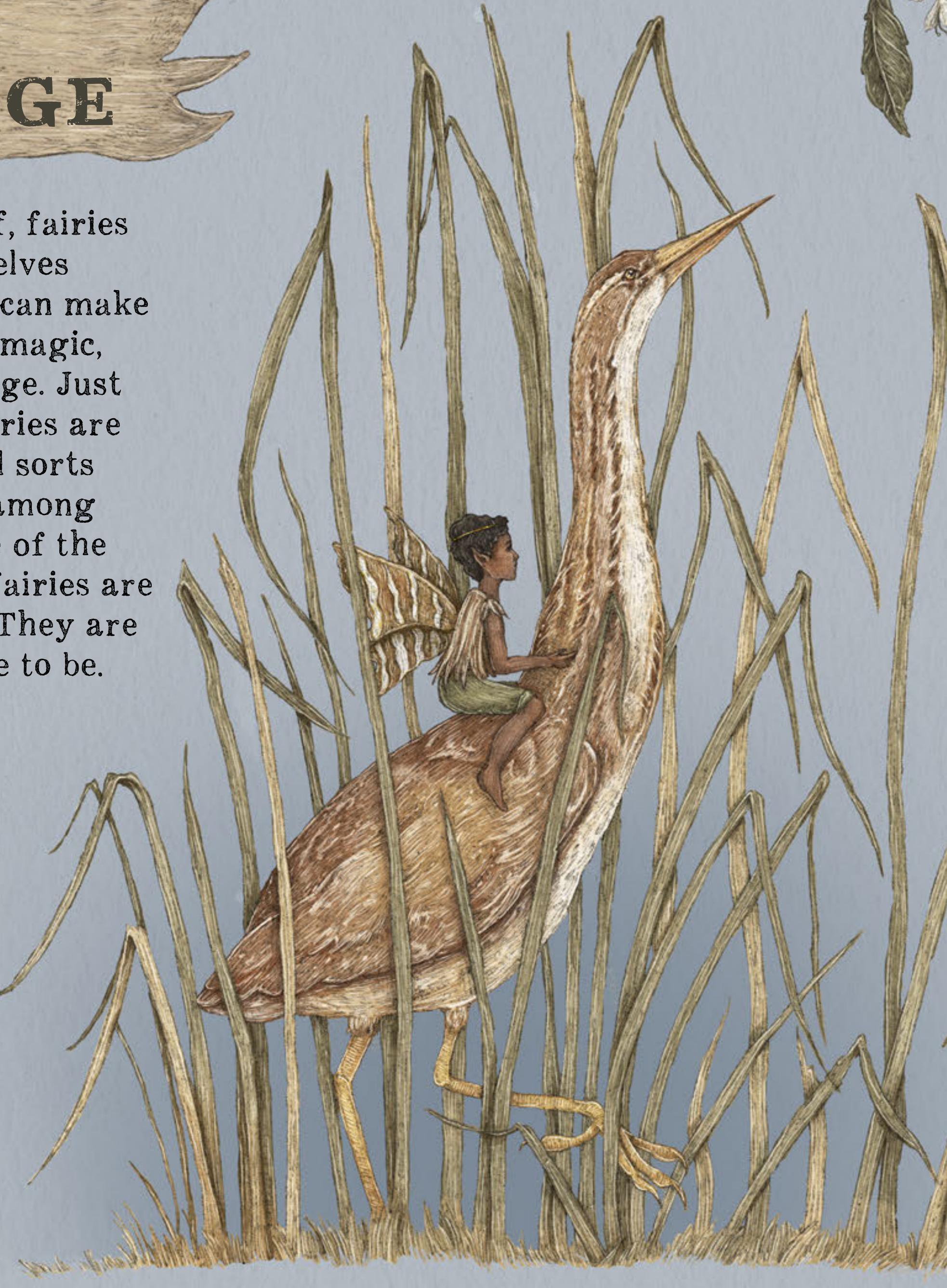
CLEVER CAMOUFLAGE

Contrary to popular belief, fairies can't really make themselves invisible. However, they can make themselves disappear! Not by magic, but instead by using camouflage. Just like many other creatures, fairies are masters of disguise and use all sorts of clever methods to blend in among leaves and flowers. This is one of the main reasons, of course, that fairies are so rarely spotted by humans. They are seldom seen unless they choose to be.

Nature's Wardrobe

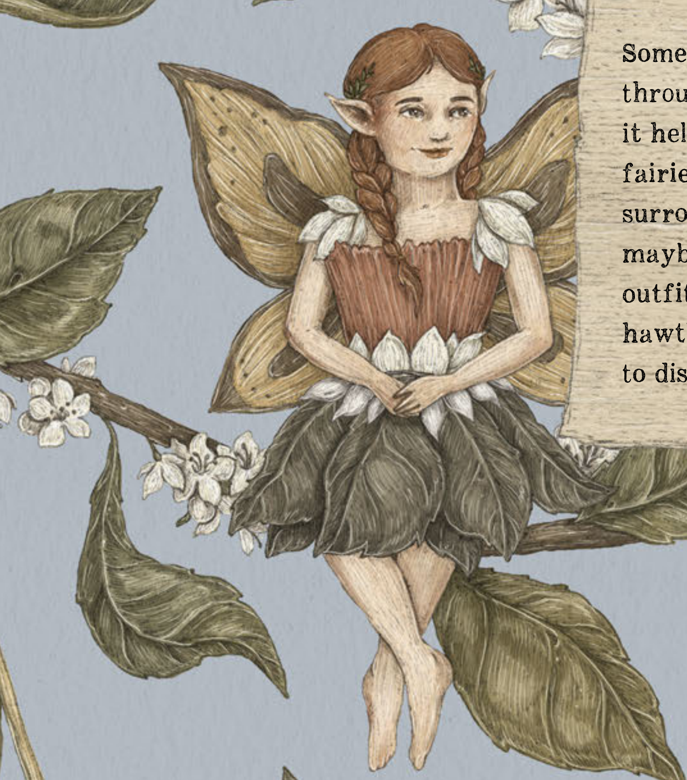
To keep out of sight of birds of prey, humans, or other dangerous creatures, most fairies blend in with their habitats. The shape, pattern and colour of fairies' wings often look like those of leaves or flowers, making it easy for the fairies to hide. To complete their disguise, fairies also make themselves clothing sewn from leaves, petals and feathers.



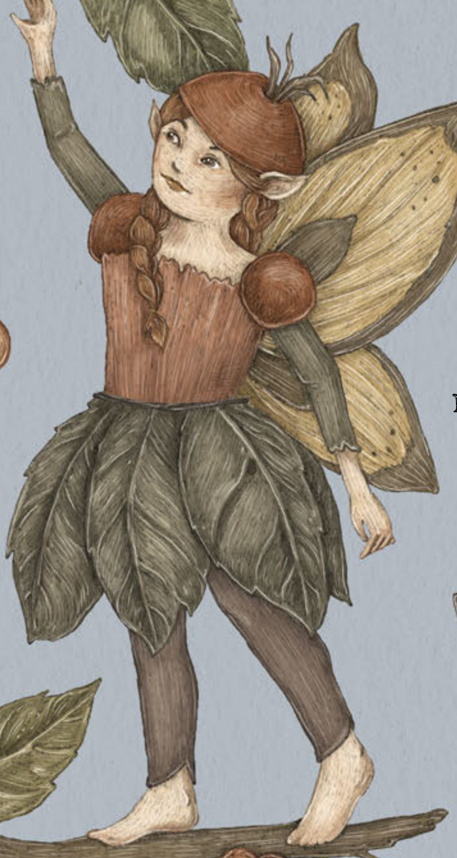


All Change!

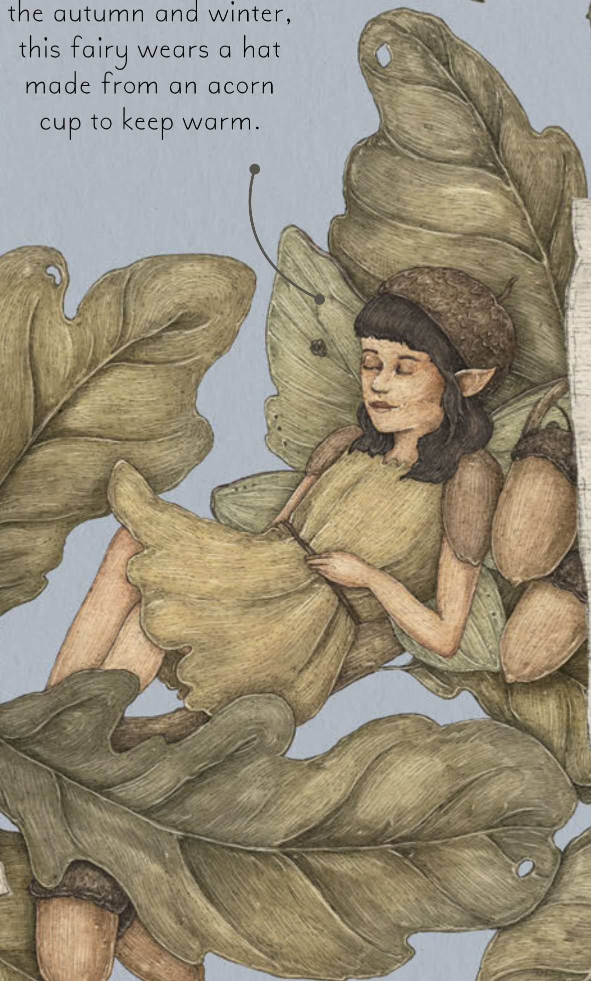
Some fairies, such as the apple tree fairy, sleep all through the winter months. This is called hibernation and it helps them stay hidden when the trees are bare. Other fairies can change their appearance to blend in with their surroundings, depending on the season. For example, mayblossom fairies (who live in hawthorn trees) wear outfits of white blossom during the spring, to match the hawthorn's flowers. In autumn they change their clothing to disguise themselves among the tree's red berries.



MAYBLOSSOM FAIRY in spring.



MAYBLOSSOM FAIRY in autumn.



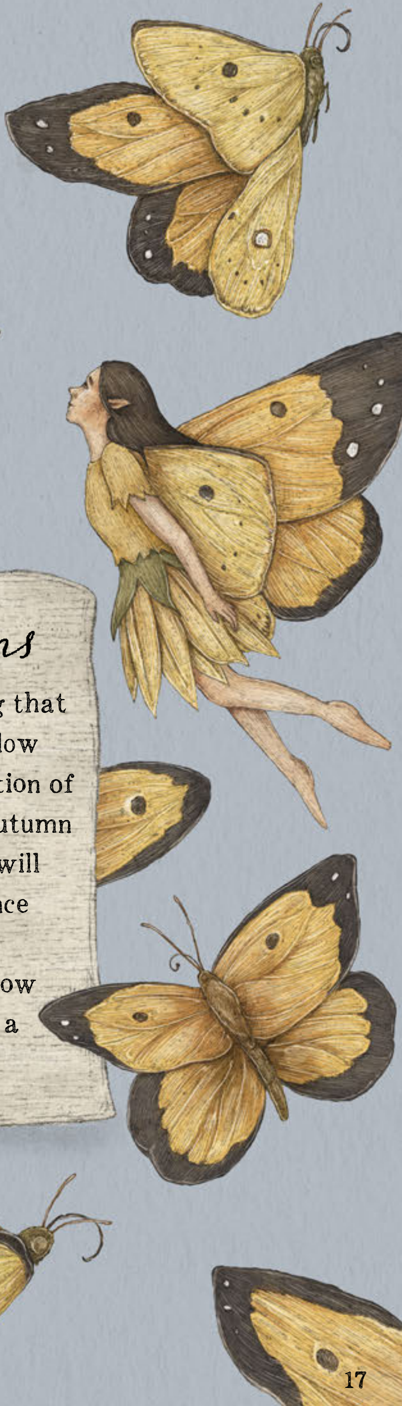
The clothes and wings of the **DRYAD** resemble oak leaves. In the autumn and winter, this fairy wears a hat made from an acorn cup to keep warm.

Now You See Me...

Reed fairies live among marshes and wetlands. They usually wear striped clothing to hide away among the tall reeds. They have a close relationship with a type of bird called a bittern. This bird has stripy beige-and-brown markings, which allow it to blend in in exactly the same way.

Travelling Companions

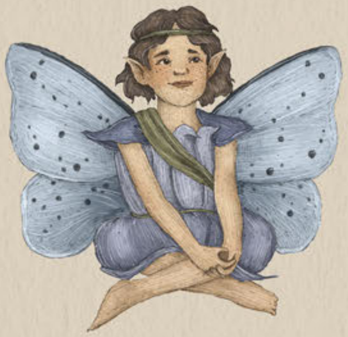
It's not just cleverly coloured wings and clothing that help fairies hide away. Their movements also allow them to blend in. Some fairies can mimic the motion of spring petals bobbing in a gentle breeze or of autumn leaves swirling in a gust of wind. Often, fairies will travel with a group of butterflies. From a distance they look quite similar, so this helps the fairies stay hidden. Next time you see some clouded yellow butterflies passing by, look closely to make sure a meadow fairy isn't hiding among them!

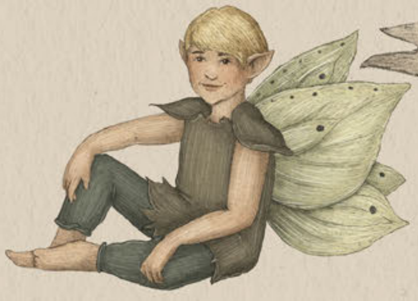


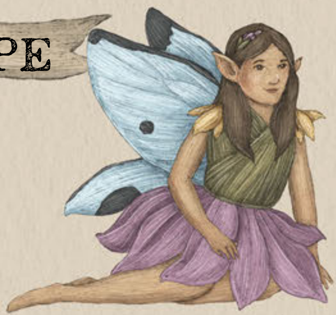
FAIRIES OF THE WORLD

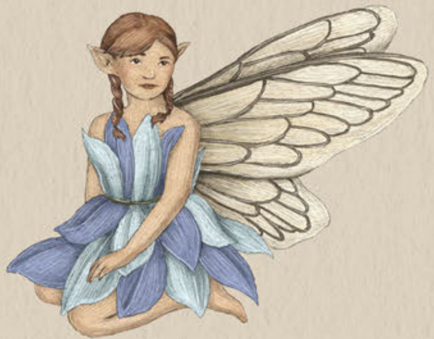
Fairies do not live only in leafy glades and gardens: if you are patient and look carefully, you may find them in some rather unexpected places. In fact, fairies live all over the world, from tropical jungles to the frozen poles; from sweltering deserts to soaring mountains. Below, you will discover the locations of some of the most common fairy species, many of which will be discussed in more detail on the following pages.

EUROPE

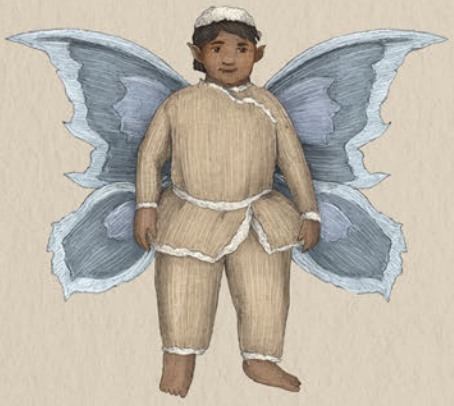

Holly Blue Fairy
(United Kingdom)

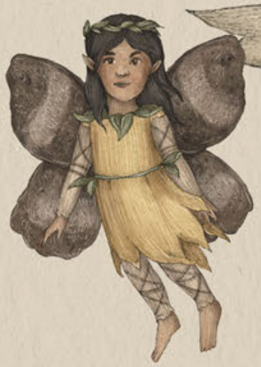

Hazel Fairy (Ireland)

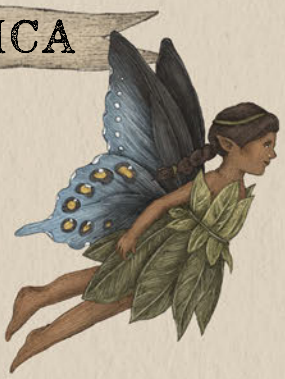

Mountain Tunder
(Carpathian Mountains)

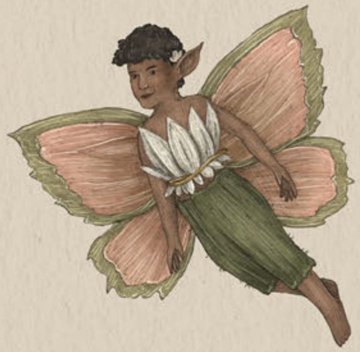

Alpine Sprite (Alps Mountains)

NORTH AMERICA

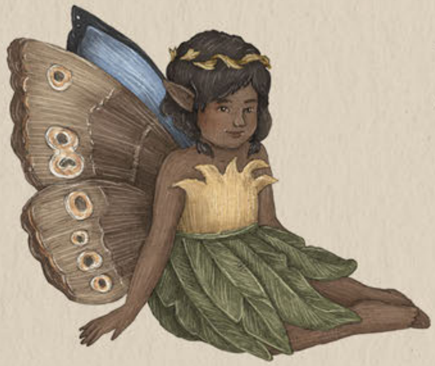

Frost Fairy (Greenland)

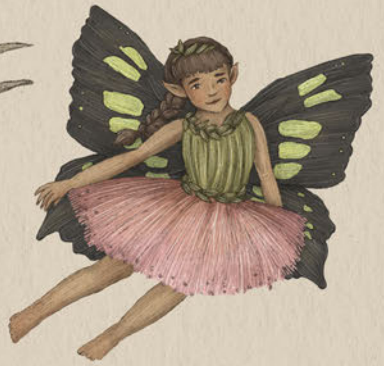

Tundra Fairy
(Northern Canada)


Jogah Sprite
(United States)

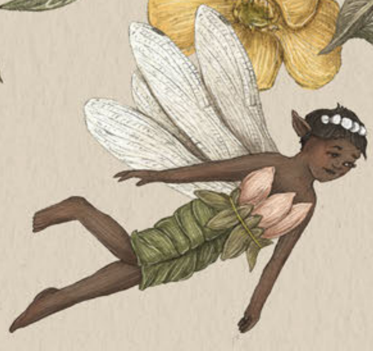

Cactus Fairy (Mexico)

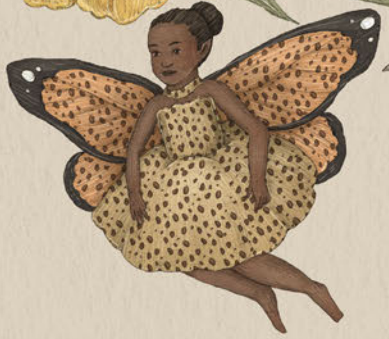
SOUTH AMERICA

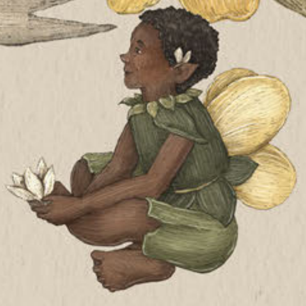

Rainforest Nymph (Amazon Rainforest)

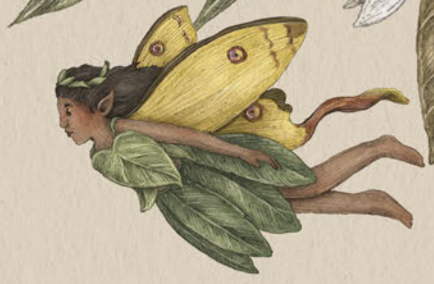

Malachite Fairy (Amazon Rainforest)

AFRICA

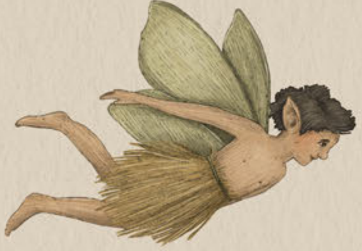

Dew Fairy (Sahara Desert)

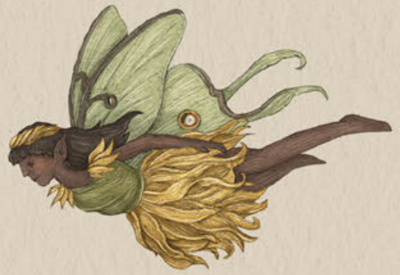

Savannah Fairy (Southern Africa)

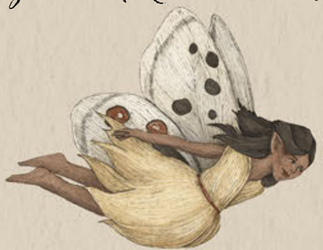

Lily Hopper (Sub Saharan Africa)

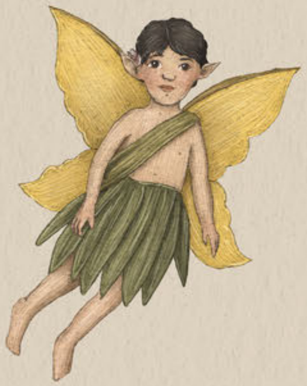

Moon Nymph (Madagascar)

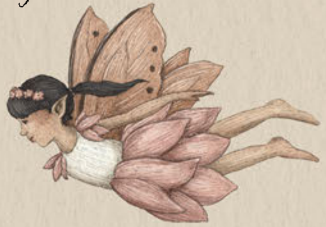
ASIA


Steppe Sprite (Russia/Mongolia)

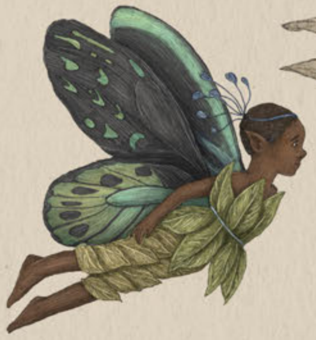

Ylang-Ylang Fairy (India)

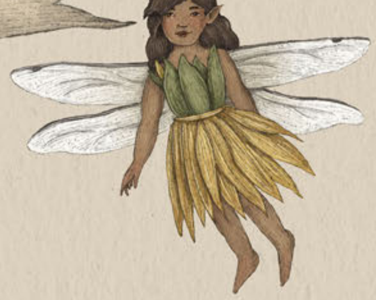

Himalayan Oread (Himalayan Mountains)


Firefly Sprite (China)

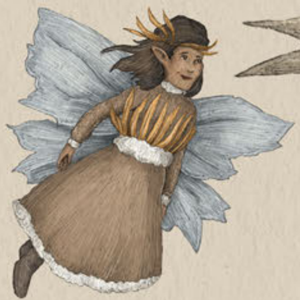

Cherry Blossom Fairy (Japan)

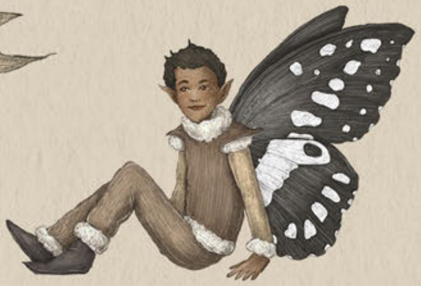
AUSTRALASIA


Queen Fairy (New Guinea)


Blue Mountain Fairy (Blue Mountains, Australia)

ANTARCTICA


Penguin Fairy (Antarctic)

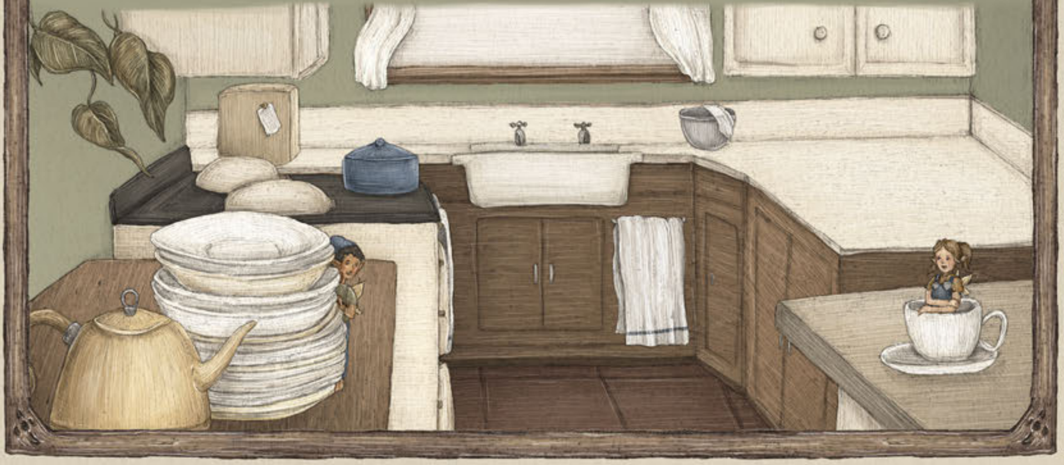

Polar Wanderer (Antarctic/Arctic)

FAIRY HABITATS

Different species of fairy live in different habitats, and each species has developed – or evolved – to suit its habitat perfectly. For example, the river sprite's webbed feet make it entirely at home in its watery world, the dew fairy's glossy wings keep it cool in the desert, and the frost fairy's layer of blubber helps it survive in freezing conditions. To understand the many different fairy species, you first need to be familiar with their various habitats.

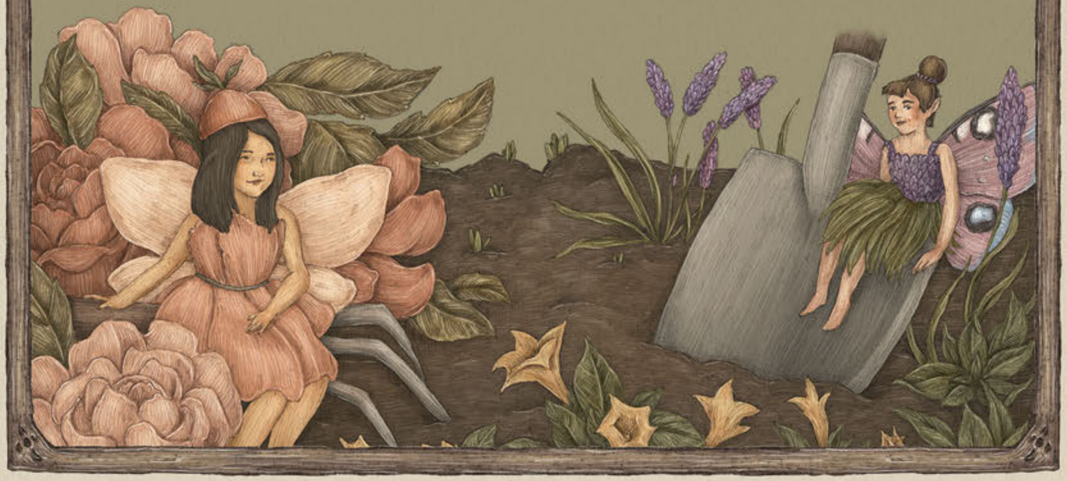
Human Homes

No matter what type of home you live in, you might – without even realising it – be sharing it with a family of fairies! Our homes are usually warm, dry places for fairies to shelter, while our crumbs and leftovers provide them with plenty of food.



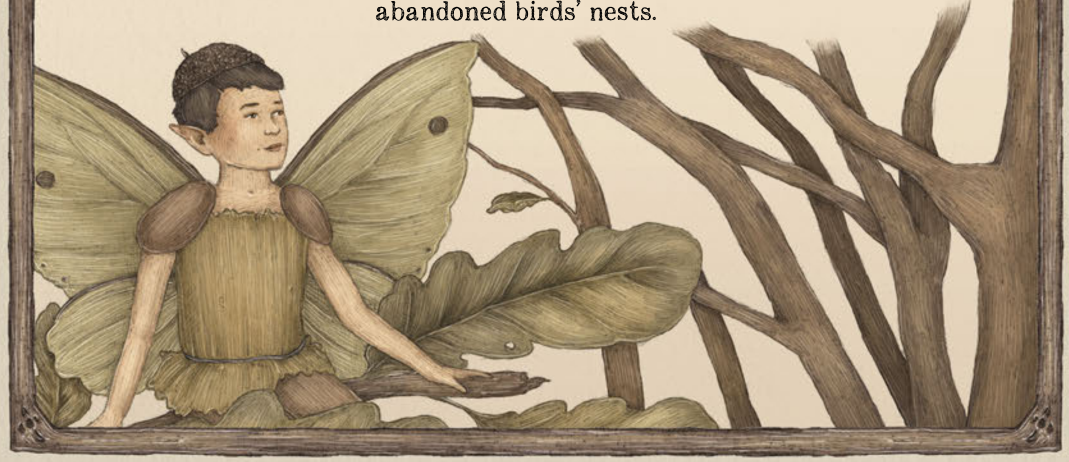
Gardens

Fairies are seldom spotted by humans, but when these rare sightings do occur, they usually take place in a garden – often in a flowerbed or a vegetable patch. Gardens are perfect locations for fairy-spotting.



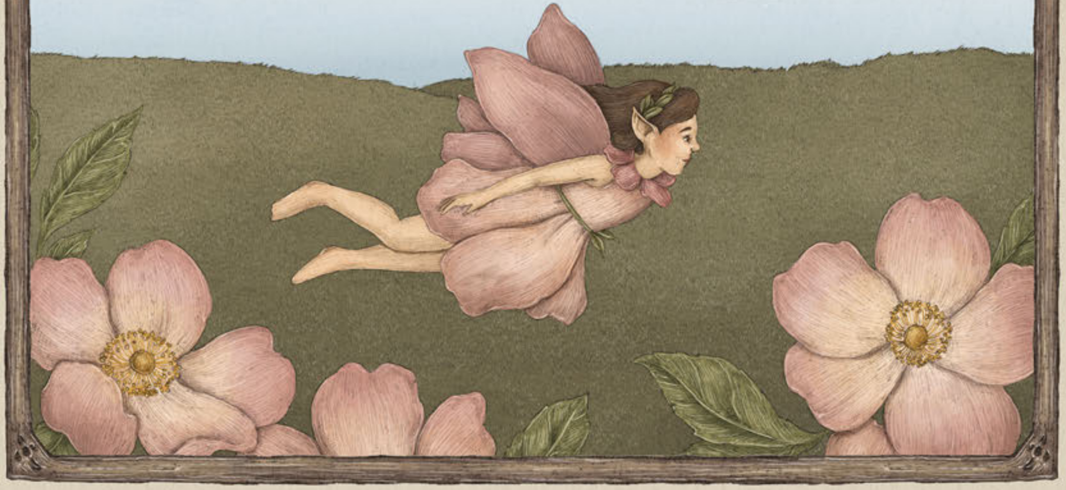
Woodlands

Temperate woodlands grow in places where there is a mild climate, plentiful rain and four distinct seasons. In autumn, the trees drop their leaves, creating a carpet of leaf litter, which provides a hiding place for some fairies. Other woodland fairies live in tree hollows or abandoned birds' nests.



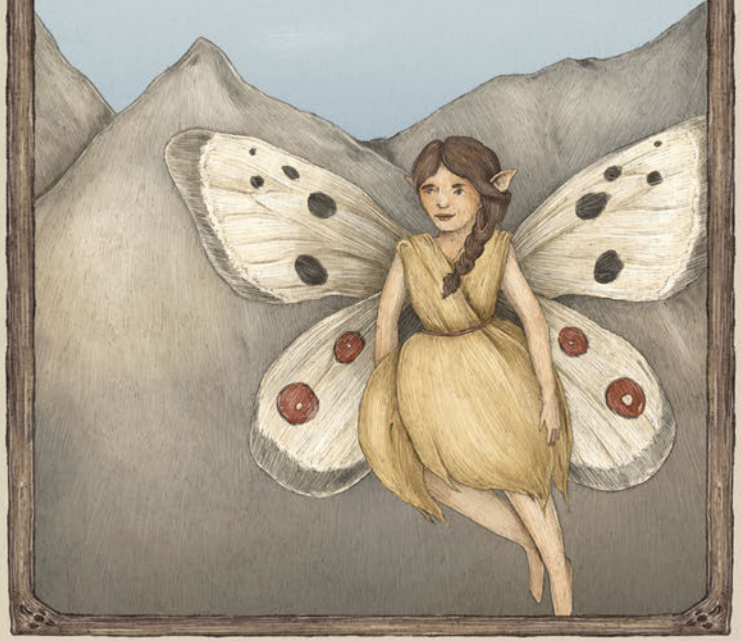
Meadows and Grasslands

From the wildflower meadows of the British Isles to the rolling prairies of the American plains or the sweeping steppes of Russia, grasslands make ideal habitats for fairies, who are well camouflaged to hide in the undergrowth.



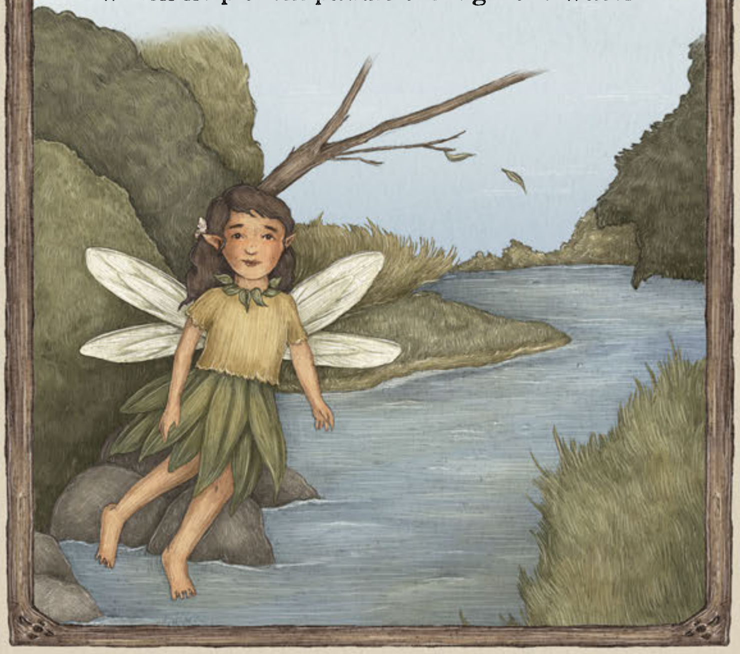
Mountains and Hills

Living in the mountains is difficult. The challenges involve bitter temperatures, strong winds, sparse vegetation and low levels of oxygen. But some species of fairy are well suited to mountain life, surviving despite these harsh conditions.



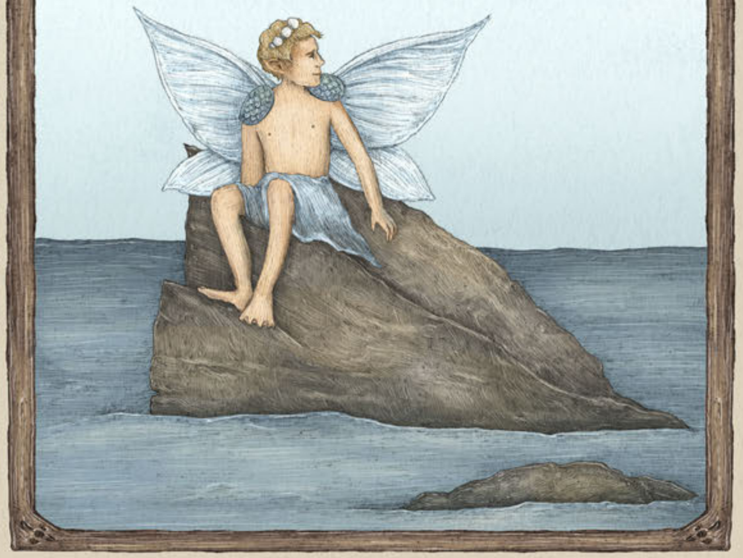
Rivers, Lakes and Wetlands

The world's freshwater habitats include rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, marshes and swamps. They provide homes to a huge array of wildlife, including fairies! Most fairies that live here have webbed feet, which help them paddle through the water.



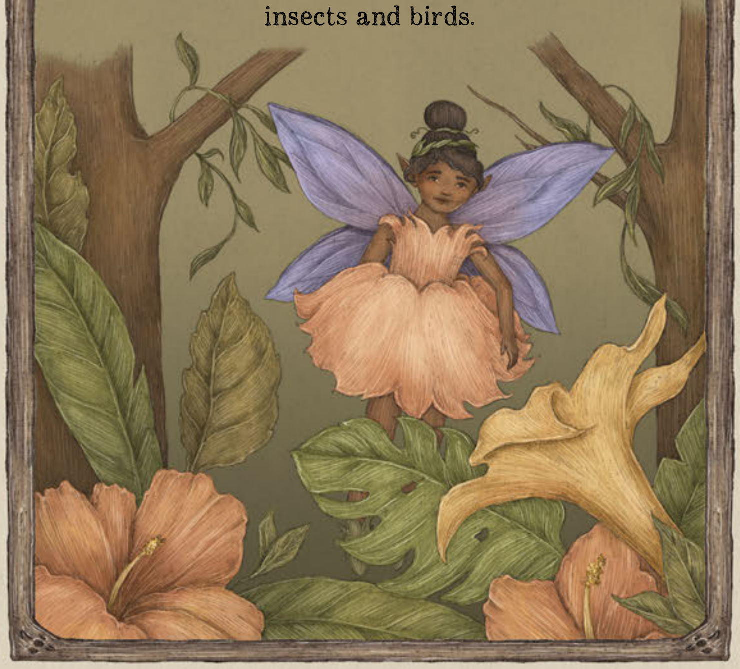
Oceans and Coasts

Covering about two thirds of the Earth's surface, the oceans combine a range of habitats. They are home to millions of creatures, including ocean fairies. These aquatic mammals are excellent swimmers, but they have to surface for air, just like whales.



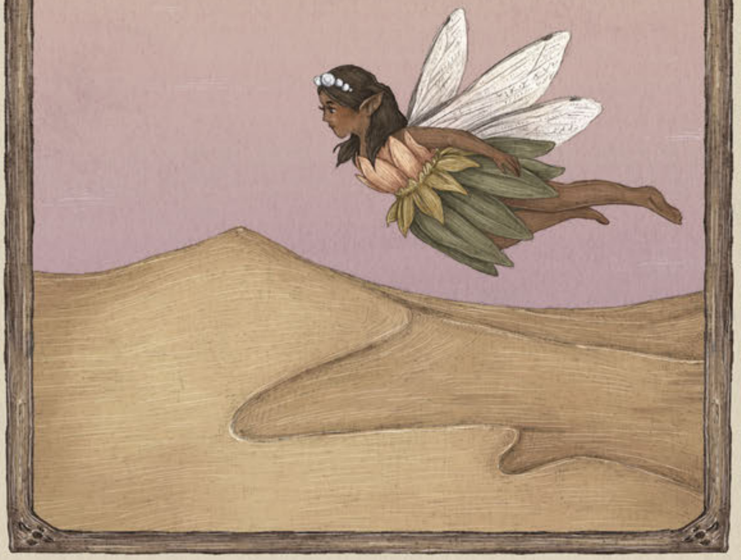
Jungles

In the tropical areas surrounding the equator, the hot, moist climate creates ideal conditions for rainforests. Among the sky-high trees live many types of fairy, alongside abundant insects and birds.



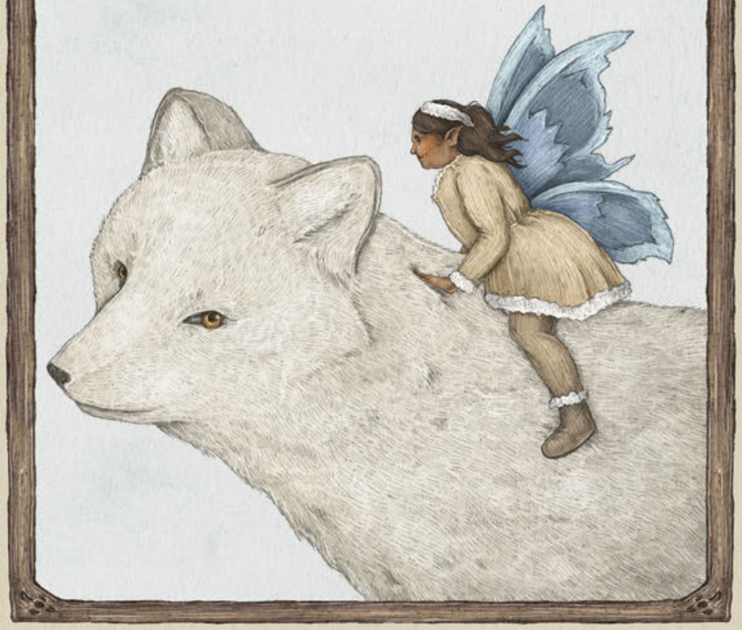
Deserts

You might not think that these scorching places could support many creatures, but life finds a way. Many desert fairies have glossy wings to reflect the sunlight, large ears to allow body heat to escape, and long, thick eyelashes to keep the sand out.



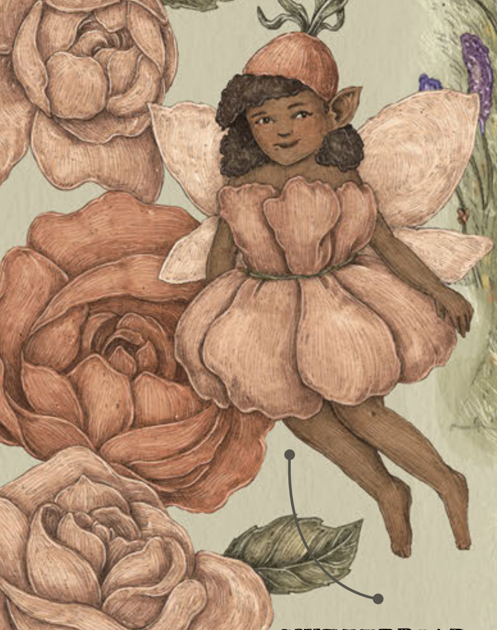
The Poles

Although the biting temperatures and gale-force winds of the Poles bring challenges, these fairies are a match for their surroundings. A thick layer of blubber keeps them warm, while their splayed toes stop them from sinking into the snow.



MEADOW AND GARDEN FAIRIES

Bursting with fragrant flowers and leafy hiding places, gardens and meadows are like playgrounds to fairies. Most fairies prefer flowerbeds and borders that have been left to grow a little wild. Garden fairies are the type of fairy most commonly spotted by humans, especially children, who sometimes come across them while playing outside.



SWEETBRIAR FAIRIES spend the spring and summer looking after roses, removing diseased leaves and keeping pests away. When autumn comes, they tuck into a feast of nutritious rose hips before curling up and hibernating for the winter months.

Sweetbriar Fairy
(Nympha rosa)

HABITAT: Gardens.

HOME: An empty flowerpot.

FEATURES: Delicate clothing made from rose petals; hat made from rose hips.

BEHAVIOUR: In winter, the sweetbriar fairy hibernates, sometimes in a quiet corner of a greenhouse, or under a garden shed.

Many garden fairies carry out important jobs, such as pollinating plants and spreading seeds.

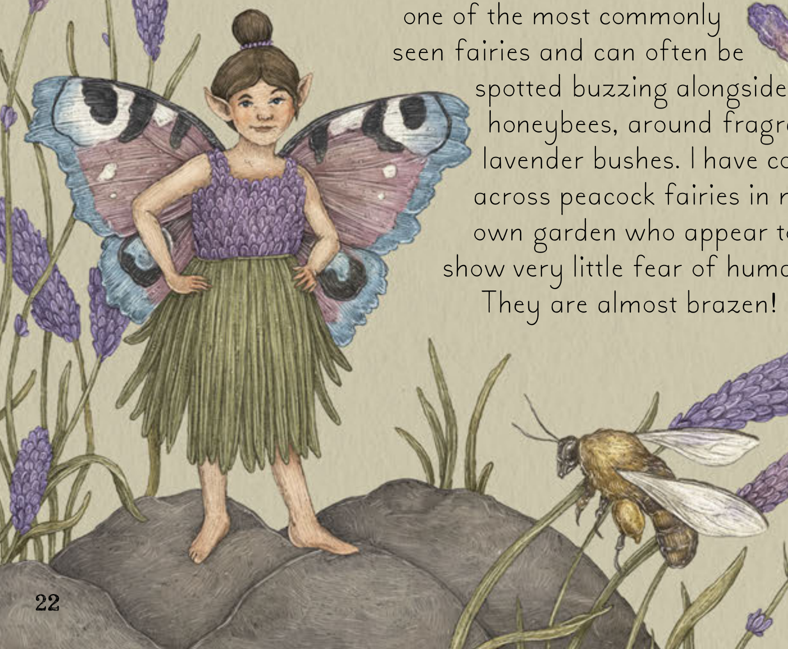
Woodbine Fairy
(Nympha tubi)

HABITAT: Alongside lanes and hedgerows, as well as in gardens.

HOME: An abandoned bird's nest or a leafy sleeping bag.

FEATURES: Green fingers; pink-striped wings.

BEHAVIOUR: Woodbine fairies love to drink tiny drops of sweet nectar from honeysuckle trumpets, using grass straws. These shy fairies have a special relationship with hazel dormice. I was once lucky enough to see one helping a dormouse build its nest using small, shredded pieces of honeysuckle bark.



The **PEACOCK FAIRY** is one of the most commonly seen fairies and can often be spotted buzzing alongside honeybees, around fragrant lavender bushes. I have come across peacock fairies in my own garden who appear to show very little fear of humans. They are almost brazen!

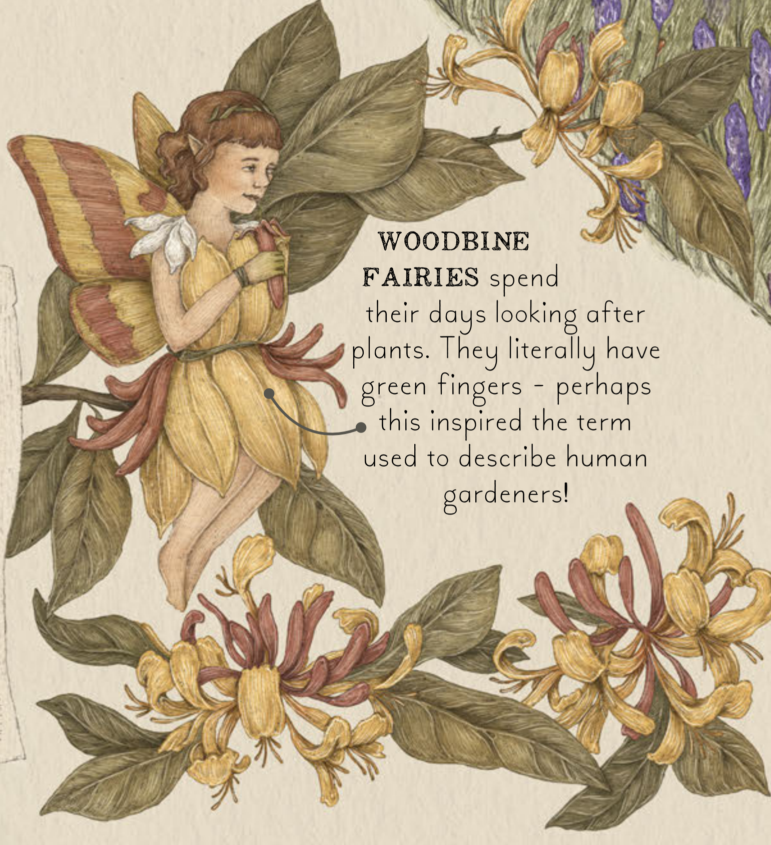
Peacock Fairy
(Nympha lavandula)

HABITAT: Anywhere lavender grows.

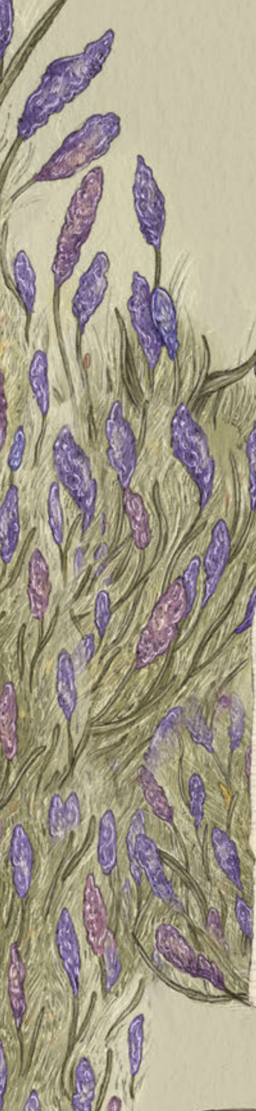
FEATURES: Large eyespots on its wings, similar to a peacock butterfly's. These look like the eyes of an owl, which may help frighten away birds of prey.

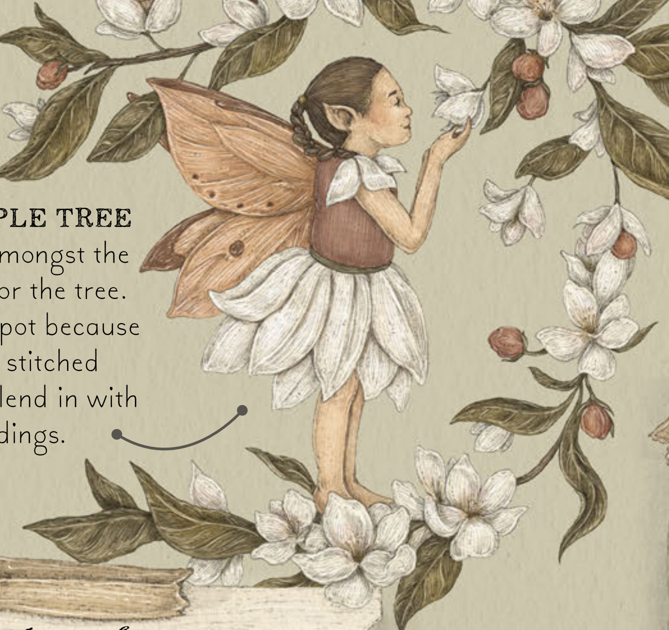
HOME: A crevice in a garden rockery, or a burrow in sandy soil.

BEHAVIOUR: Peacock fairies appear to have a close relationship with honeybees, sometimes helping them collect pollen and nectar.



WOODBINE FAIRIES spend their days looking after plants. They literally have green fingers – perhaps this inspired the term used to describe human gardeners!





In springtime, **APPLE TREE FAIRIES** bustle amongst the blossoms, caring for the tree. They are tricky to spot because their beautifully stitched clothes help them blend in with their surroundings.

Apple Tree Fairy (Nympha pomorum)

HABITAT: Orchards and gardens.

FEATURES: Wears clothing made from apple blossom for camouflage.

HOME: A hole in a tree trunk.

BEHAVIOUR: These fairies care for the apple tree and its fruit. In winter they hibernate, staying hidden when the tree is bare.

Pepper Pot Fairy (Nympha dormiens)

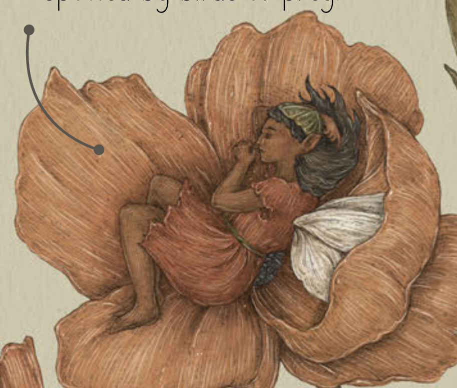
HABITAT: Wildflower gardens and meadows.

HOME: Sleeps inside a poppy flower, which closes up at night.

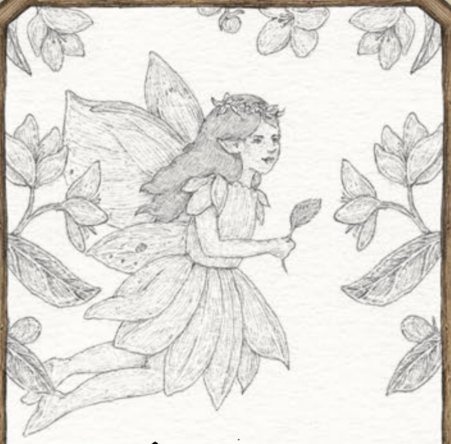
FEATURES: Bee-like wings.

BEHAVIOUR: In summer, the pepper pot fairy gently shakes the stems of poppies to sprinkle out the seeds from the seed-heads. These seed-heads are known as pepper pots, which is where the fairy gets its name.

Sleepy and slow-moving, the **PEPPER POT FAIRY** is the lazybones of the fairy world. This may be because of its diet of poppy seeds, which cause drowsiness. These fairies move very slowly, which helps them avoid being spotted by birds of prey.

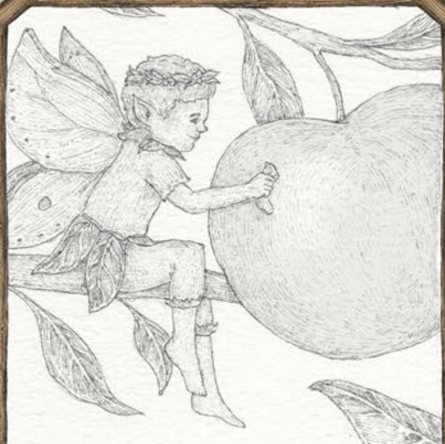


A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE APPLE TREE FAIRY



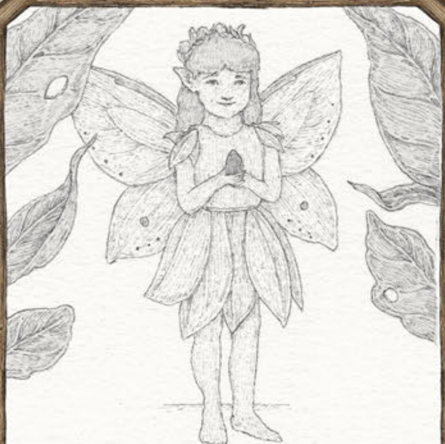
Spring

In spring, apple trees sprout leaves and begin to blossom. It's a busy time for apple tree fairies, who help carry pollen from one flower to another, to encourage fruit to grow. They help protect fruit from late frosts by wrapping them in spider's silk.



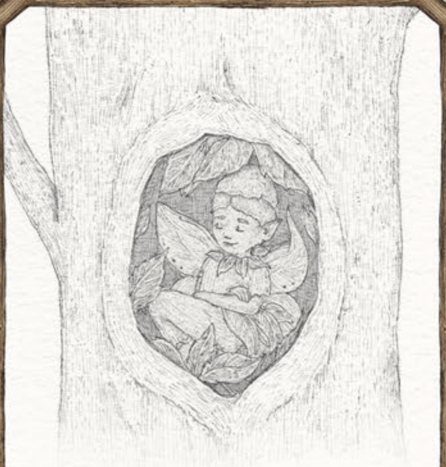
Summer

When summer arrives, the fruit on the trees grows and ripens and is cared for by the fairies. They make sure the tree has enough water to swell its apples and they keep away codling moths, who like to lay their eggs on young apples, causing worms.



Autumn

When autumn comes, the fruit drops to the ground, releasing its seeds. Apple tree fairies feast on the fruit, building their strength for the winter. They also help scatter and water the seeds, so that new trees will grow, providing more fairy homes and food.

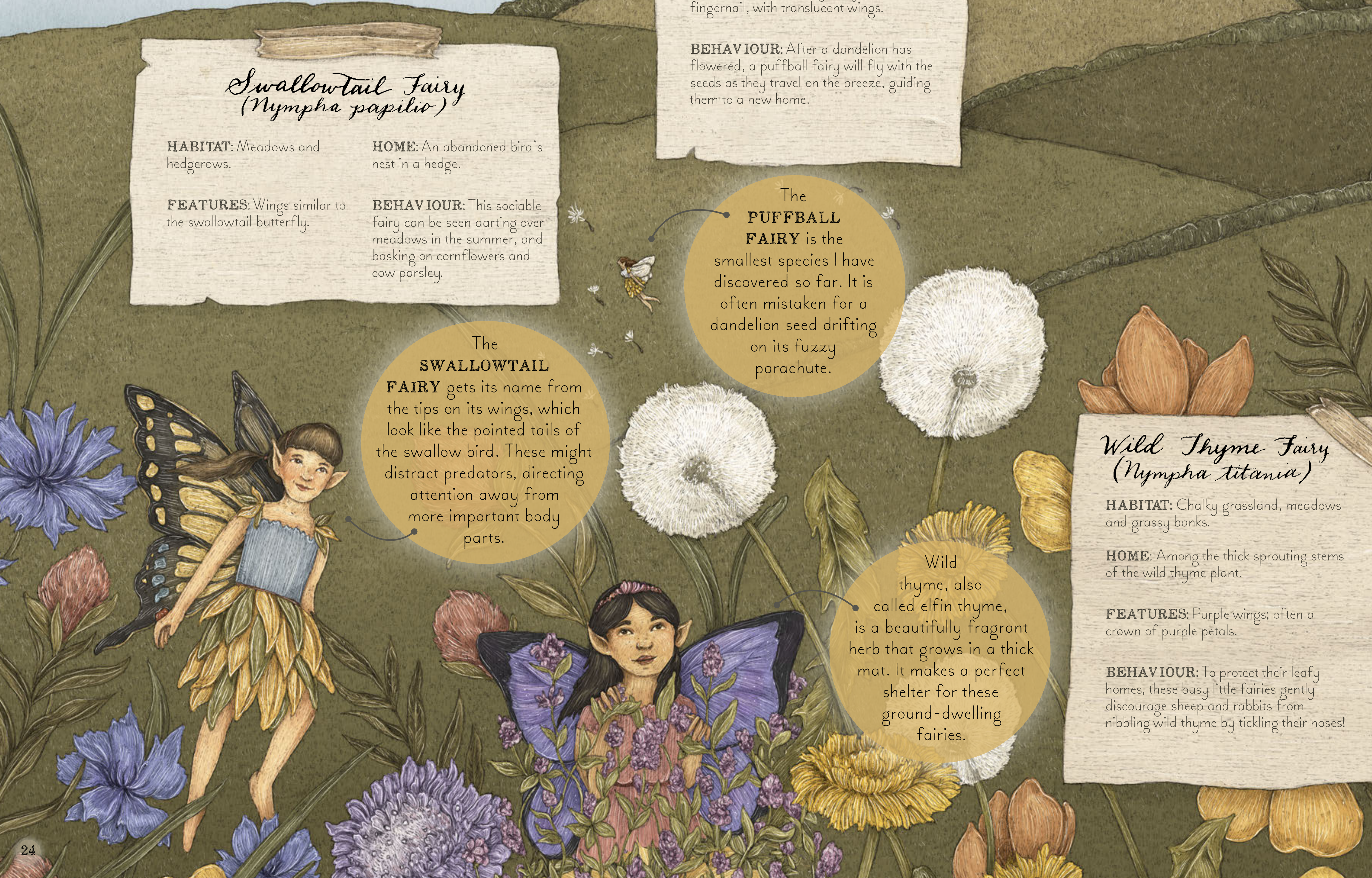


Winter

In late autumn, the leaves change colour and fall to the ground, leaving the tree bare. During the winter the apple tree rests, as does the apple tree fairy, who hibernates until spring arrives once more.

MORE MEADOW AND GARDEN FAIRIES

Hedgerows and wildflower meadows make perfect homes for fairies, who thrive among tall grasses and in leafy, shaded nooks. Today, some ancient hedgerows are being torn up to make room for larger fields and farm vehicles. It is vital that we protect these precious habitats, which are home to insects, birds, bats, voles, harvest mice and, of course, fairies.



Swallowtail Fairy
(Nympha papilio)

HABITAT: Meadows and hedgerows.

FEATURES: Wings similar to the swallowtail butterfly.

HOME: An abandoned bird's nest in a hedge.

BEHAVIOUR: This sociable fairy can be seen darting over meadows in the summer, and basking on cornflowers and cow parsley.

The **SWALLOWTAIL FAIRY** gets its name from the tips on its wings, which look like the pointed tails of the swallow bird. These might distract predators, directing attention away from more important body parts.

Puffball Fairy
(Nympha minima)

HABITAT: Meadows and gardens.

HOME: Beneath the leaves of a dandelion plant.

FEATURES: This tiny fairy is the size of a fingernail, with translucent wings.

BEHAVIOUR: After a dandelion has flowered, a puffball fairy will fly with the seeds as they travel on the breeze, guiding them to a new home.

The **PUFFBALL FAIRY** is the smallest species I have discovered so far. It is often mistaken for a dandelion seed drifting on its fuzzy parachute.

Wild Thyme Fairy
(Nympha titania)

HABITAT: Chalky grassland, meadows and grassy banks.

HOME: Among the thick sprouting stems of the wild thyme plant.

FEATURES: Purple wings; often a crown of purple petals.

BEHAVIOUR: To protect their leafy homes, these busy little fairies gently discourage sheep and rabbits from nibbling wild thyme by tickling their noses!

Wild thyme, also called elfin thyme, is a beautifully fragrant herb that grows in a thick mat. It makes a perfect shelter for these ground-dwelling fairies.

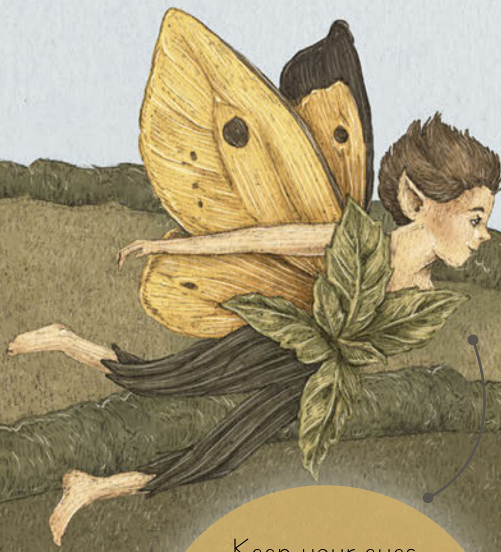
Mayblossom Fairy (Nympha maie)

HABITAT: Meadows and hedgerows.

HOME: Nest made from leaves, twigs and collected wool.

FEATURES: Clothing made from hawthorn leaves and blossom.

BEHAVIOUR: I have noticed that many mayblossom fairies have a special relationship with hedgehogs. They often bring them food, help look after their babies and pick fleas out from among their pointy spines.



Meadow Fairy (Nympha pratorum)

HABITAT: Wildflower meadows and pastures.

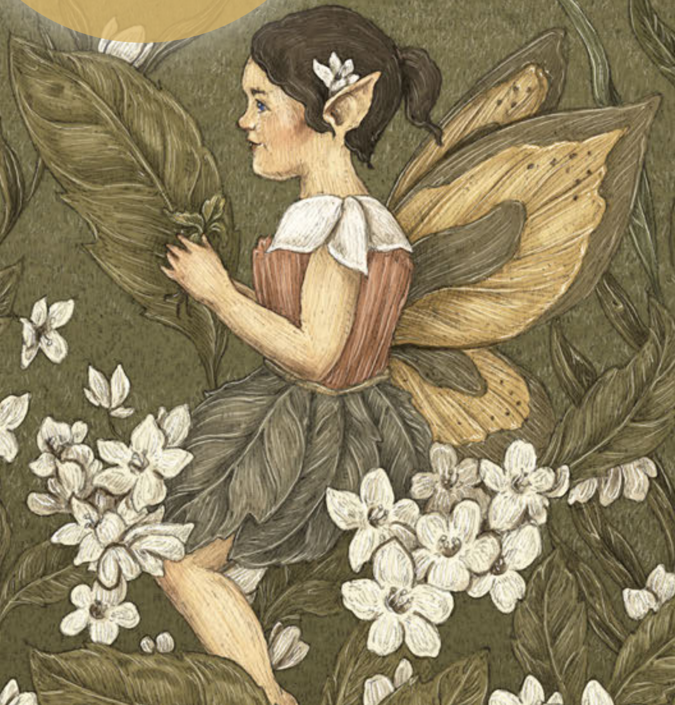
HOME: Often shares a burrow with field mice.

FEATURES: Bright yellow wings blend in with flowers.

BEHAVIOUR: The meadow fairy feeds on seeds and berries, which it shares with its field mice nest-mates in exchange for shelter.

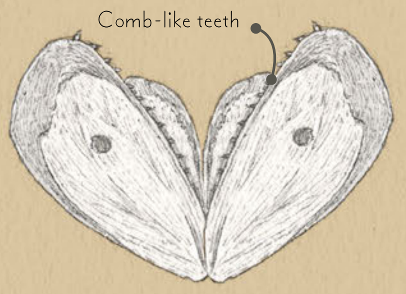
Keep your eyes open when walking in a wildflower meadow: if you're lucky, you might spot a **MEADOW FAIRY** flitting among the butterflies.

MAYBLOSSOM FAIRIES like to feed on the haws, or berries, of the hawthorn tree, as well as on the plant's tender shoots, known by many country children as 'bread and cheese'.



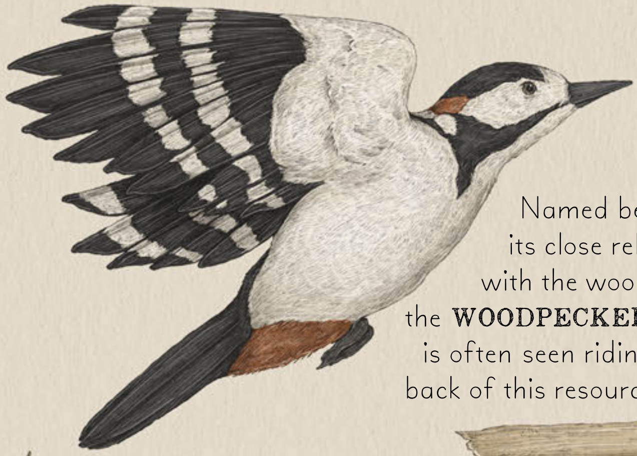
Chirp, chirp!

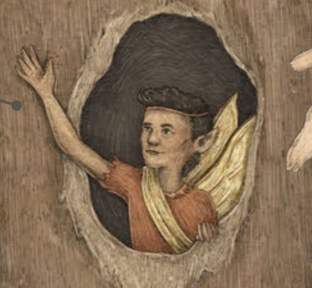
You may have heard a meadow fairy without realising it. What sounds like the chirping of crickets is sometimes the call of the male meadow fairy. To attract the attention of a female, the male meadow fairy makes a loud call by rubbing his wings together. These have special comb-like teeth, which scrape against each other to make a chirping noise.



WOODLAND FAIRIES

Next time you find yourself in a woodland, take a moment to stop, close your eyes and listen. As you notice the leaves rustling in the wind and the birds chattering to each other, you might be fortunate enough to hear the light voices of fairies, too. Woodlands make perfect homes for fairies, who take shelter among the branches or on the leafy forest floor.





Named because of its close relationship with the woodpecker, the **WOODPECKER FAIRY** is often seen riding on the back of this resourceful bird.

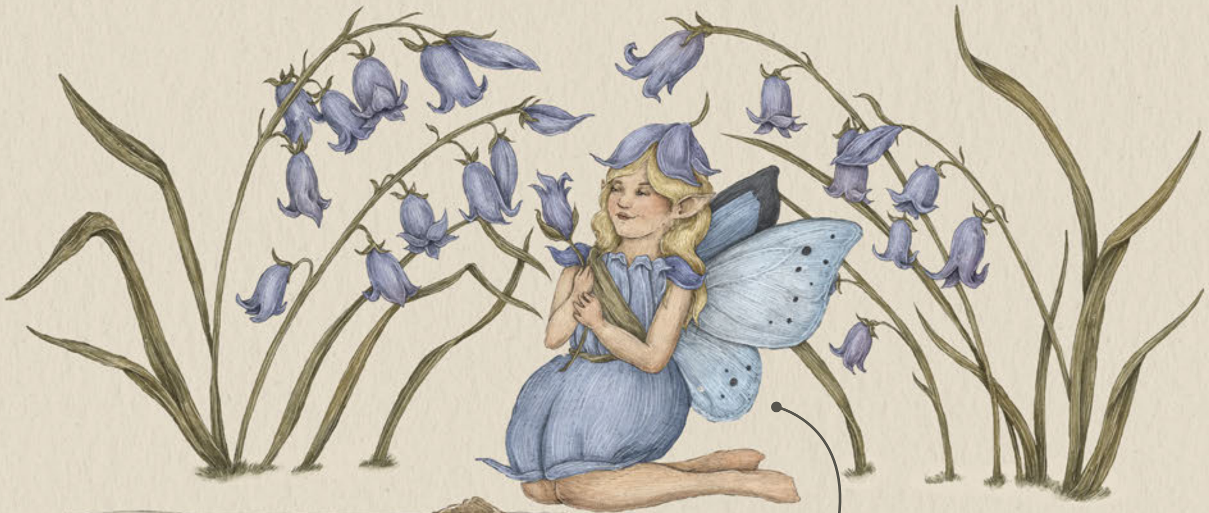
Woodpecker Fairy
(Nympha picidae)

HABITAT: Forests and woodlands.

HOME: A hole pecked out of a tree trunk by an obliging woodpecker.

FEATURES: Compared to many other species, this fairy has unusually small wings. Instead of flying, it often hitches a ride on the back of a woodpecker.

BEHAVIOUR: These fairies will defend the chiselled nests of woodpeckers while the birds are away foraging. The holes are popular with swallows and starlings, so a fairy friend is a useful guard.



Bluebells have always held a special place in the folklore of the British Isles. There is a nugget of truth in these old tales: if you look hard enough, you may indeed find fairies living in bluebell woods.

Holly Blue Fairy
(Nympha caerula)

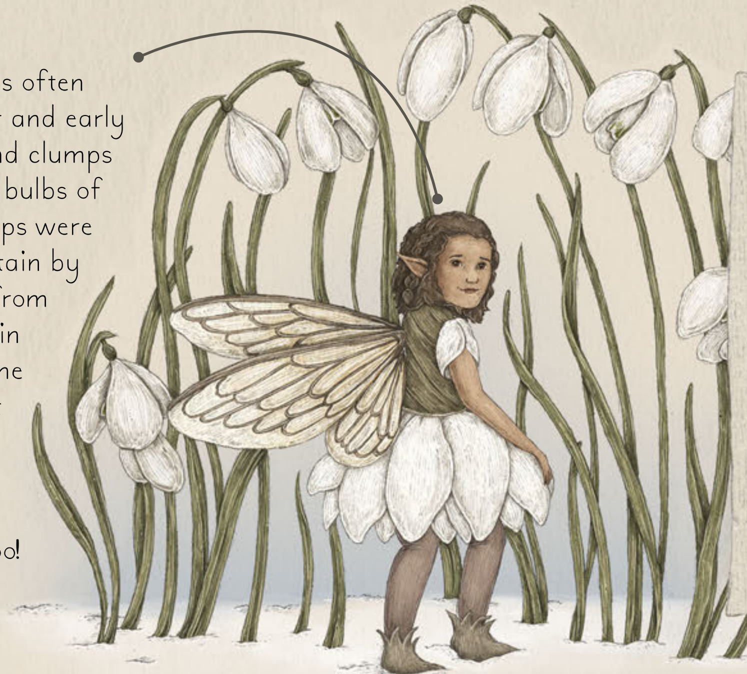
HABITAT: Woodlands of the British Isles.

HOME: Usually an underground burrow.

FEATURES: Wings are remarkably similar to the holly blue butterfly, which gives the fairy excellent camouflage among the bluebells, where it spends much of its time.

BEHAVIOUR: These sociable fairies are most active in late spring, when beautiful bluebells carpet the ground, making a fairy haven. In winter, they hibernate in underground badger setts or rabbit warrens.

This hardy fairy is often spotted in late winter and early spring flitting around clumps of snowdrops. The bulbs of Crimean snowdrops were brought back to Britain by soldiers returning from the Crimean War (in Eastern Europe) in the 1850s. I believe that these fairies might have stowed away with the bulbs and made the journey too!



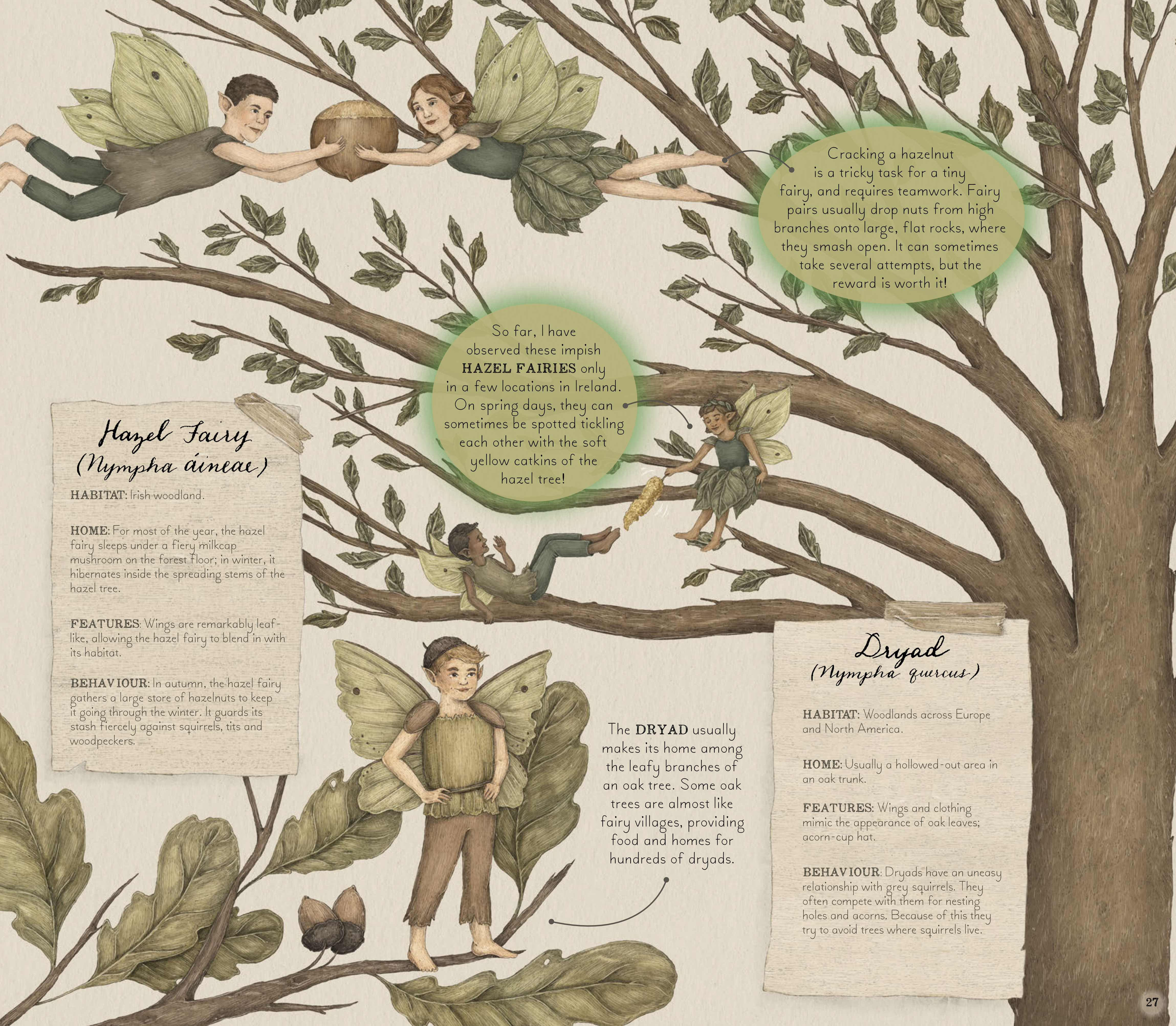
Candlemas Belle
(Nympha galanthus)

HABITAT: Damp European woodlands.

HOME: Often a hollowed-out tree stump.

FEATURES: The Candlemas belle has sheer wings made of a very strong, flexible material that appears to have thermal properties.

BEHAVIOUR: Candlemas belle fairies do not hibernate, but in the freezing weather they wrap their wings around themselves to make a warm cocoon.



Cracking a hazelnut is a tricky task for a tiny fairy, and requires teamwork. Fairy pairs usually drop nuts from high branches onto large, flat rocks, where they smash open. It can sometimes take several attempts, but the reward is worth it!

So far, I have observed these impish **HAZEL FAIRIES** only in a few locations in Ireland. On spring days, they can sometimes be spotted tickling each other with the soft yellow catkins of the hazel tree!

Hazel Fairy
(Nympha áineae)

HABITAT: Irish woodland.

HOME: For most of the year, the hazel fairy sleeps under a fiery milkcap mushroom on the forest floor; in winter, it hibernates inside the spreading stems of the hazel tree.

FEATURES: Wings are remarkably leaf-like, allowing the hazel fairy to blend in with its habitat.

BEHAVIOUR: In autumn, the hazel fairy gathers a large store of hazelnuts to keep it going through the winter. It guards its stash fiercely against squirrels, tits and woodpeckers.

The **DRYAD** usually makes its home among the leafy branches of an oak tree. Some oak trees are almost like fairy villages, providing food and homes for hundreds of dryads.

Dryad
(Nympha quercus)

HABITAT: Woodlands across Europe and North America.

HOME: Usually a hollowed-out area in an oak trunk.

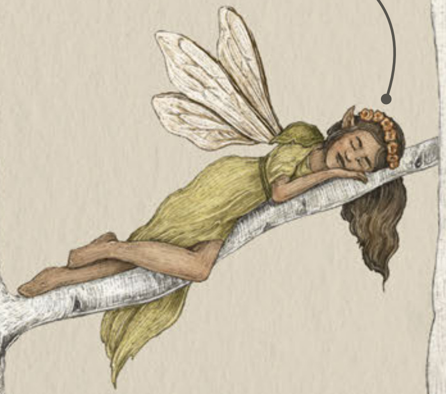
FEATURES: Wings and clothing mimic the appearance of oak leaves; acorn-cup hat.

BEHAVIOUR: Dryads have an uneasy relationship with grey squirrels. They often compete with them for nesting holes and acorns. Because of this they try to avoid trees where squirrels live.

MORE WOODLAND FAIRIES

Trees are the lungs of the planet and are vital for our world. Rooted in the earth but reaching up to the skies, trees give out oxygen, allowing us all to breathe. As well as furnishing us with timber and medicine, trees provide homes for countless creatures all around the world, including fairies!

The **BIRCH FAIRY** is nocturnal, dozing during the day and coming out at night to look for nuts, seeds and berries to eat.



Birch Fairy
(Nympha betula)

HABITAT: European woodland, particularly in Czech Republic.

HOME: A nest in the crook of a birch tree.

FEATURES: Wings are fine and translucent, almost glass-like.

BEHAVIOUR: As twilight falls, these playful fairies can sometimes be seen swinging from the supple twigs of the beautiful birch tree. This fairy protects its tree by picking off aphids, which are small insects that suck the sap from leaves, causing them to curl and yellow.

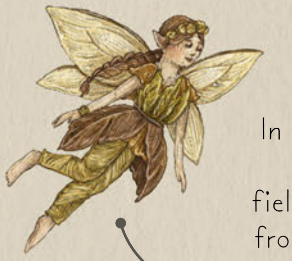
Rowan Fairy
(Nympha sorbus)

HABITAT: Forest and woodland.

HOME: A nest of leaves and twigs on the forest floor.

FEATURES: In spring and summer, these fairies wear outfits of green and white, blending in with the rowan blossom. In autumn, their clothing changes to match the tree's red berries.

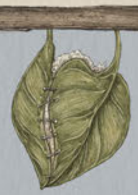
BEHAVIOUR: After feeding on rowan berries, these fairies help spread the seeds, so new trees will grow.



In late autumn, the robust little **ROWAN FAIRY** takes flight with flocks of fieldfare and redwing thrushes, migrating from Scandinavia to Britain and France. The journey is timed to coincide with the ripening of juicy rowan berries.

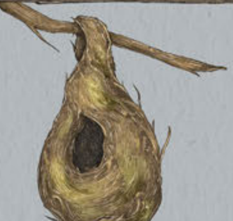
FAIRY HOMES

Fairies live in all sorts of homes, from carefully woven nests or tree-trunk hollows to underground burrows.



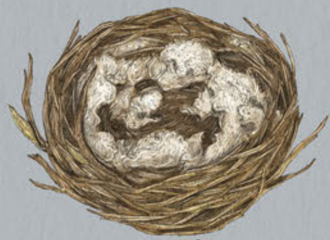
Leafy Lair

Like the tailor bird, some fairies stitch together leaves to make their homes.



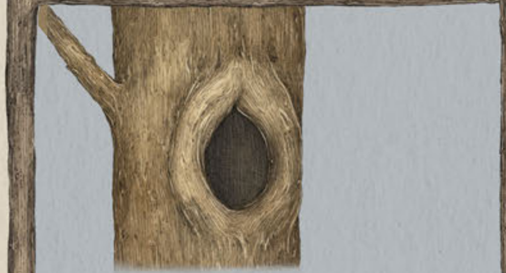
Neat Nests

Many fairies build themselves treetop nests using sticks, twigs and grasses.



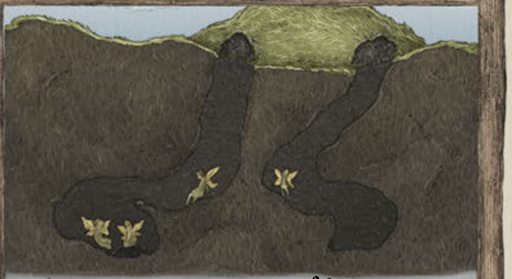
Warm and Woolly

Some fairies gather together discarded feathers or wool from sheep's fleeces to line their nests.



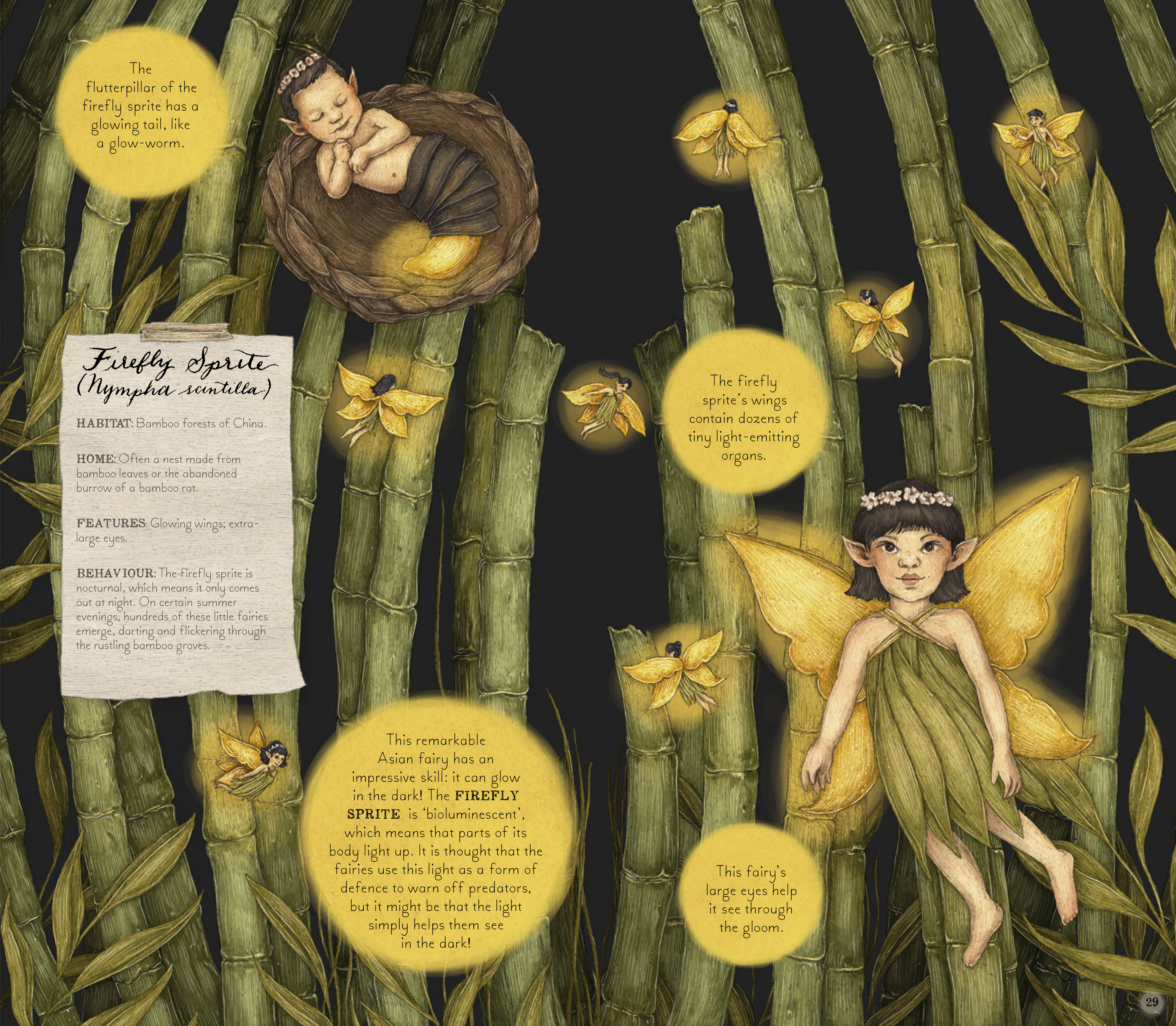
Tree House

Hollows in tree-trunks make ideal homes for fairies, although they sometimes face stiff competition for these from birds and grey squirrels.



Underground Burrow

Some species build their own burrows. Others move into abandoned animal burrows, or even cohabit with rabbits and mice.



Firefly Sprite (*Nympha scintilla*)

HABITAT: Bamboo forests of China.

HOME: Often a nest made from bamboo leaves or the abandoned burrow of a bamboo rat.

FEATURES: Glowing wings; extra-large eyes.

BEHAVIOUR: The firefly sprite is nocturnal, which means it only comes out at night. On certain summer evenings, hundreds of these little fairies emerge, darting and flickering through the rustling bamboo groves.

This remarkable Asian fairy has an impressive skill: it can glow in the dark! The **FIREFLY SPRITE** is 'bioluminescent', which means that parts of its body light up. It is thought that the fairies use this light as a form of defence to warn off predators, but it might be that the light simply helps them see in the dark!

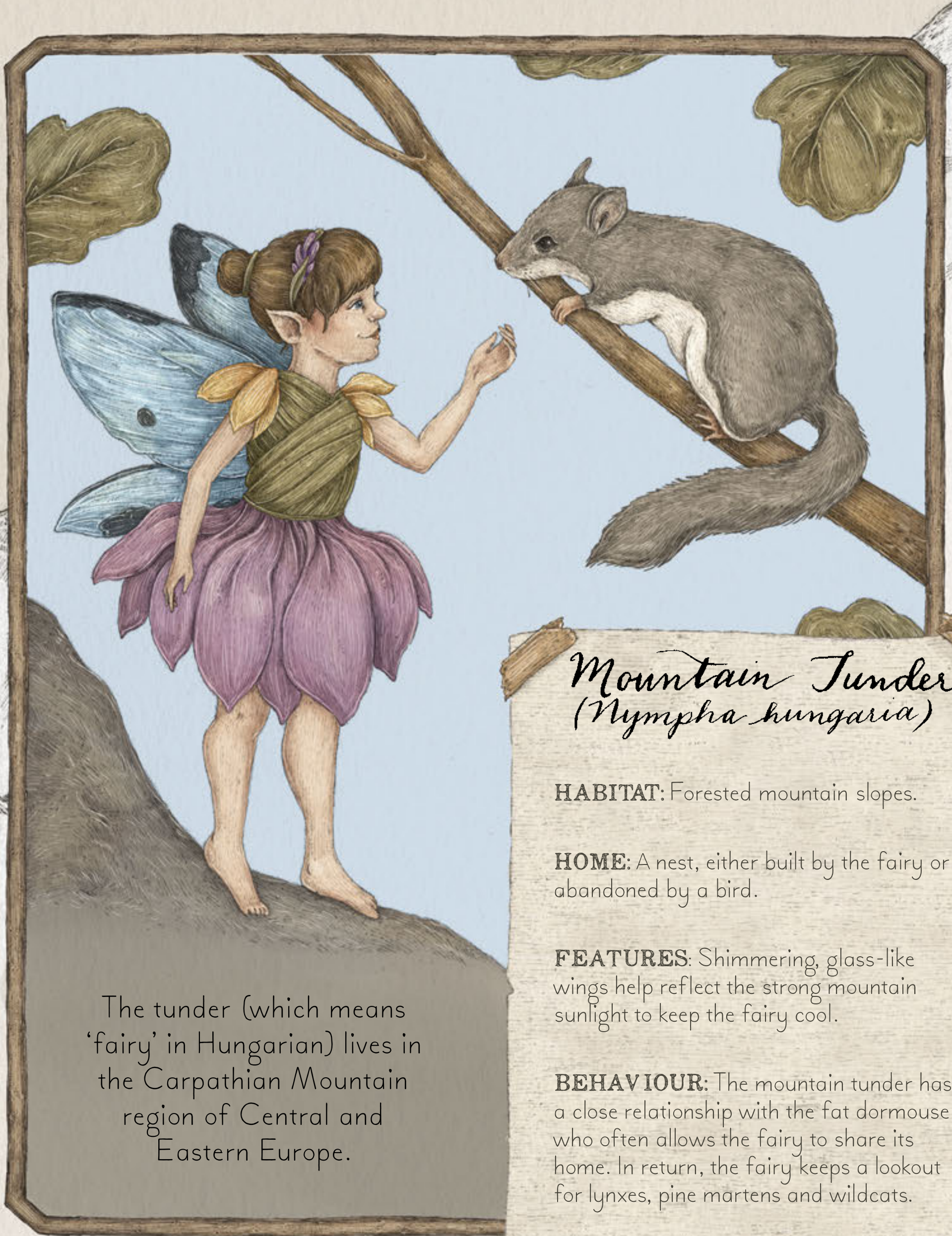
The flutterpillar of the firefly sprite has a glowing tail, like a glow-worm.

The firefly sprite's wings contain dozens of tiny light-emitting organs.

This fairy's large eyes help it see through the gloom.

MOUNTAIN AND HILL FAIRIES

From their snow-covered peaks to their thickly forested foothills, the world's mountains are home to some remarkable types of fairy. Many species of mountain fairy are especially suited to these particular habitats and don't exist anywhere else on earth.



The tunder (which means 'fairy' in Hungarian) lives in the Carpathian Mountain region of Central and Eastern Europe.

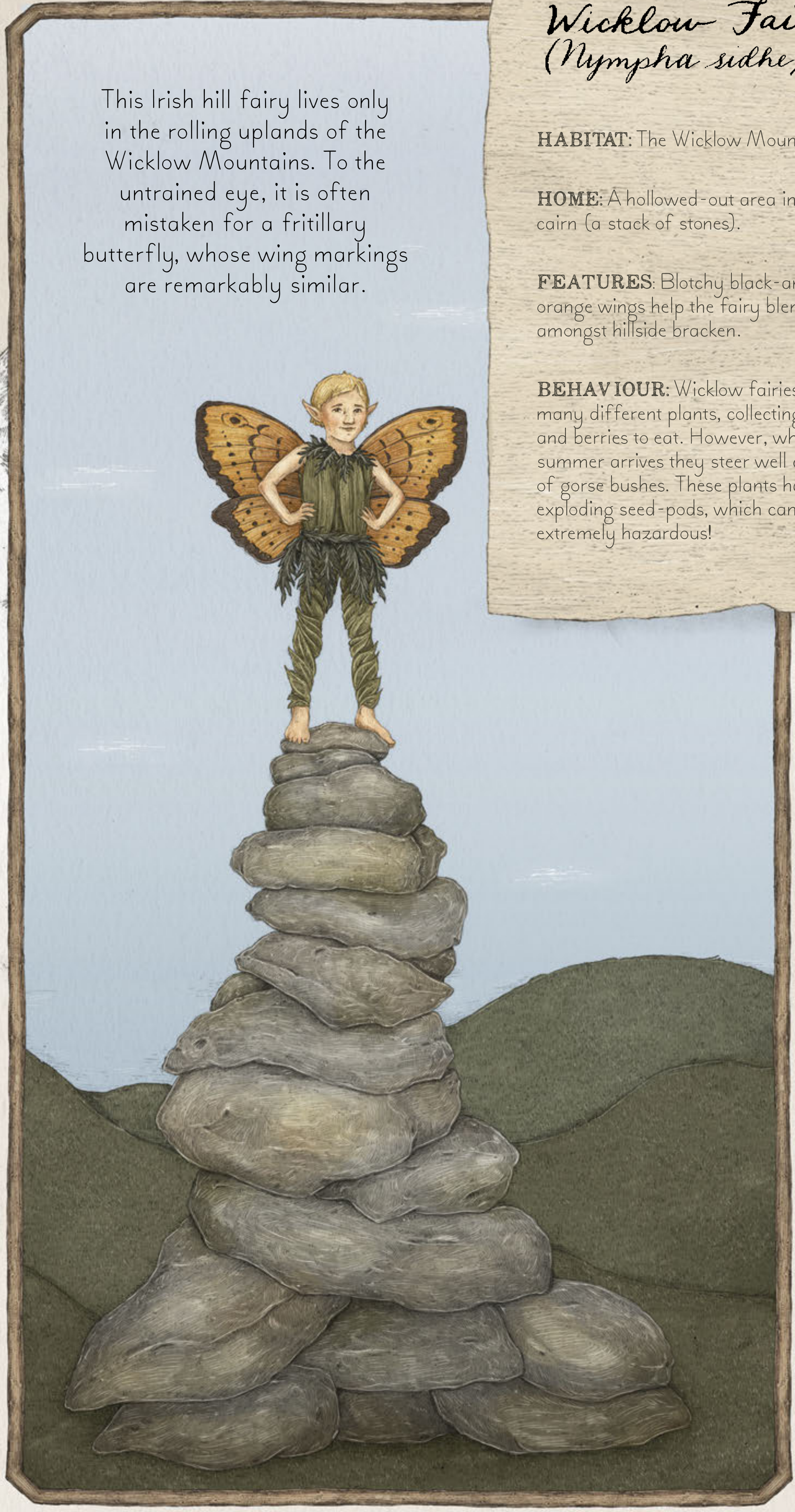
Mountain Tunder
(*Nympha hungaria*)

HABITAT: Forested mountain slopes.

HOME: A nest, either built by the fairy or abandoned by a bird.

FEATURES: Shimmering, glass-like wings help reflect the strong mountain sunlight to keep the fairy cool.

BEHAVIOUR: The mountain tunder has a close relationship with the fat dormouse, who often allows the fairy to share its home. In return, the fairy keeps a lookout for lynxes, pine martens and wildcats.



This Irish hill fairy lives only in the rolling uplands of the Wicklow Mountains. To the untrained eye, it is often mistaken for a fritillary butterfly, whose wing markings are remarkably similar.

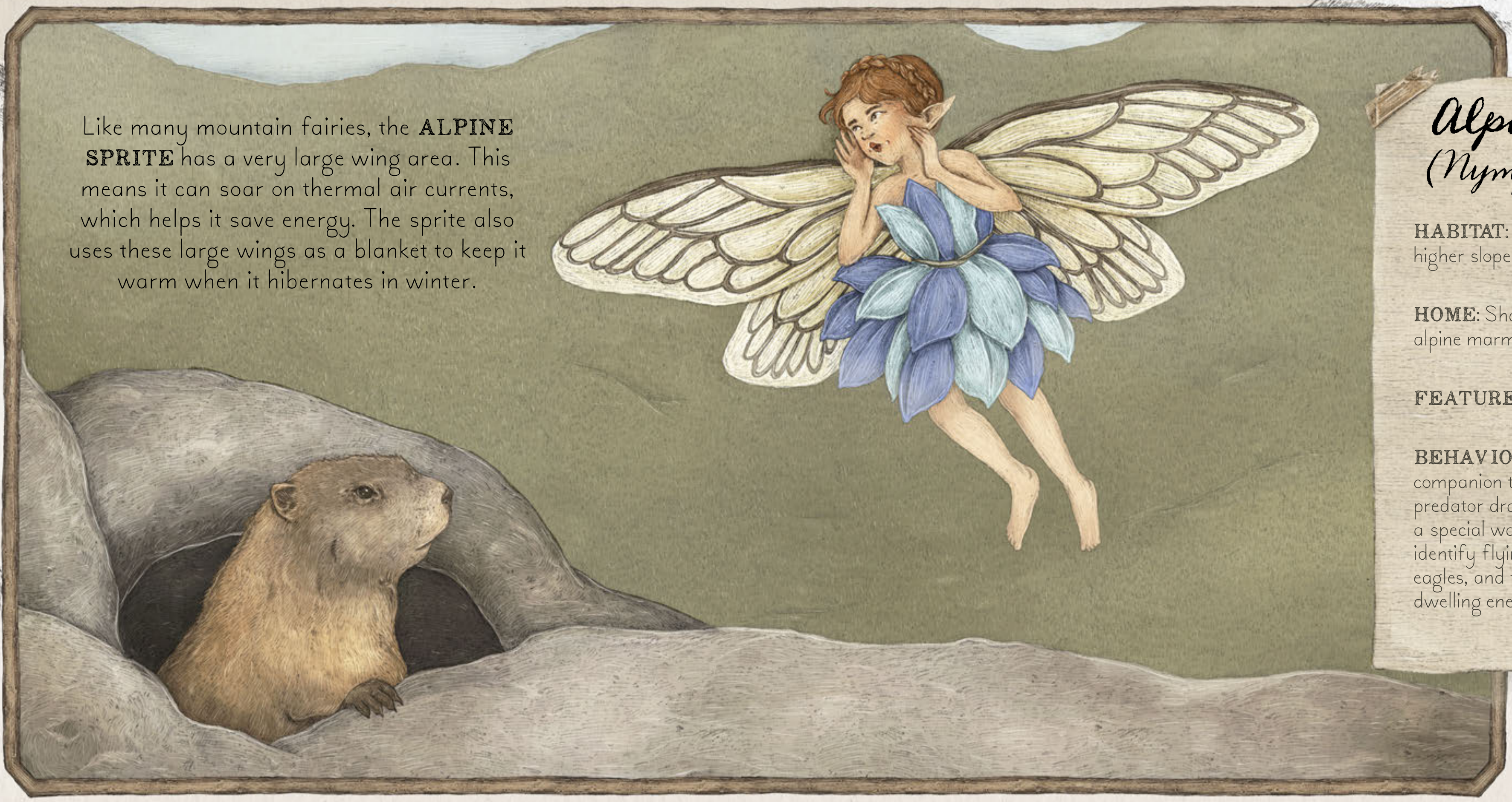
Wicklow Fairy
(*Nympha sidhe*)

HABITAT: The Wicklow Mountains.

HOME: A hollowed-out area inside a cairn (a stack of stones).

FEATURES: Blotchy black-and-orange wings help the fairy blend in amongst hillside bracken.

BEHAVIOUR: Wicklow fairies visit many different plants, collecting seeds and berries to eat. However, when summer arrives they steer well clear of gorse bushes. These plants have exploding seed-pods, which can be extremely hazardous!



Like many mountain fairies, the **ALPINE SPRITE** has a very large wing area. This means it can soar on thermal air currents, which helps it save energy. The sprite also uses these large wings as a blanket to keep it warm when it hibernates in winter.

Alpine Sprite
(Nympha alpum)

HABITAT: Alpine meadows and higher slopes.

HOME: Shares a burrow with the alpine marmot.

FEATURES: Unusually large wings.

BEHAVIOUR: This fairy is a useful companion to the alpine marmot. When a predator draws close, the sprite produces a special warning cry: one whistle to identify flying hunters, such as golden eagles, and two short bursts for ground-dwelling enemies, such as wolves.

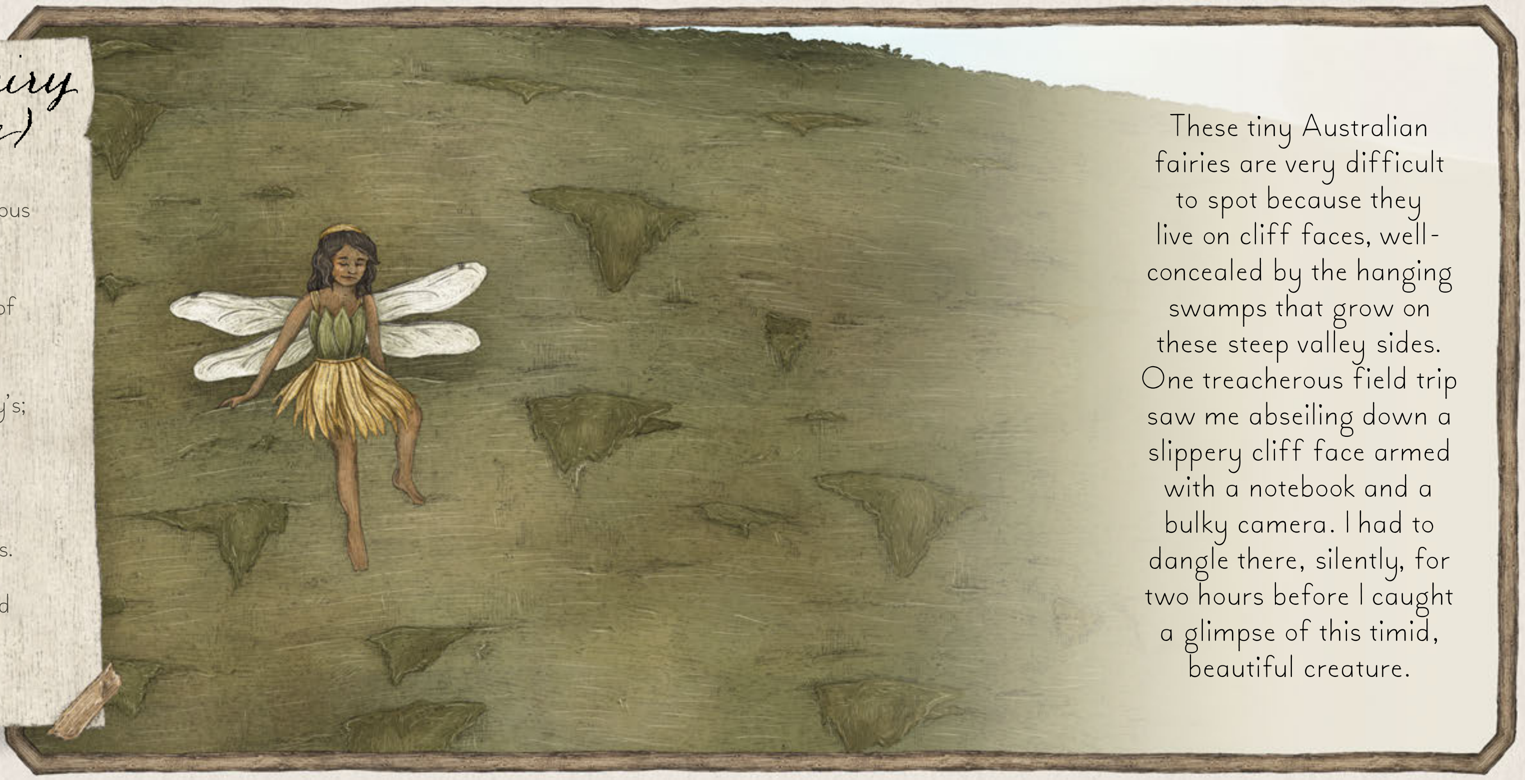
Blue Mountain Fairy
(Nympha katoombae)

HABITAT: Hanging swamps on mountainous rock faces.

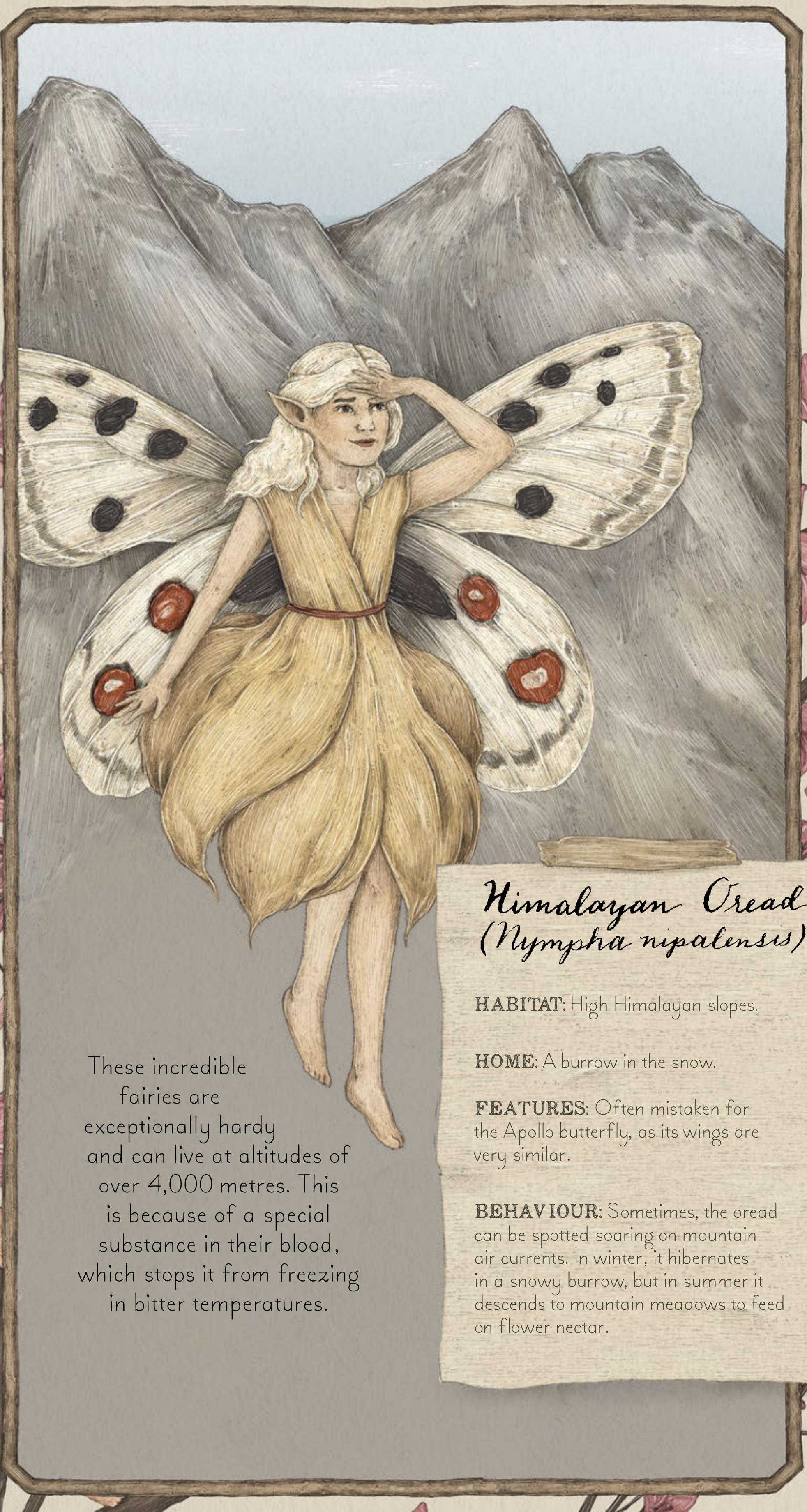
HOME: A rocky crevice or cliff ledge (out of reach of dingoes and other predators).

FEATURES: Wings similar to a dragonfly's; leafy clothing to blend in among cliffside vegetation.

BEHAVIOUR: Blue mountain fairies are shy creatures, usually living alone or in pairs. The plants of the hanging swamp provide them with ample food, so they have no need to venture far from their cliffside homes.



These tiny Australian fairies are very difficult to spot because they live on cliff faces, well-concealed by the hanging swamps that grow on these steep valley sides. One treacherous field trip saw me abseiling down a slippery cliff face armed with a notebook and a bulky camera. I had to dangle there, silently, for two hours before I caught a glimpse of this timid, beautiful creature.



Himalayan Oread
(Nympha nipalensis)

HABITAT: High Himalayan slopes.

HOME: A burrow in the snow.

FEATURES: Often mistaken for the Apollo butterfly, as its wings are very similar.

BEHAVIOUR: Sometimes, the oread can be spotted soaring on mountain air currents. In winter, it hibernates in a snowy burrow, but in summer it descends to mountain meadows to feed on flower nectar.

These incredible fairies are exceptionally hardy and can live at altitudes of over 4,000 metres. This is because of a special substance in their blood, which stops it from freezing in bitter temperatures.

Tailor Fairy
(Nympha sartor)

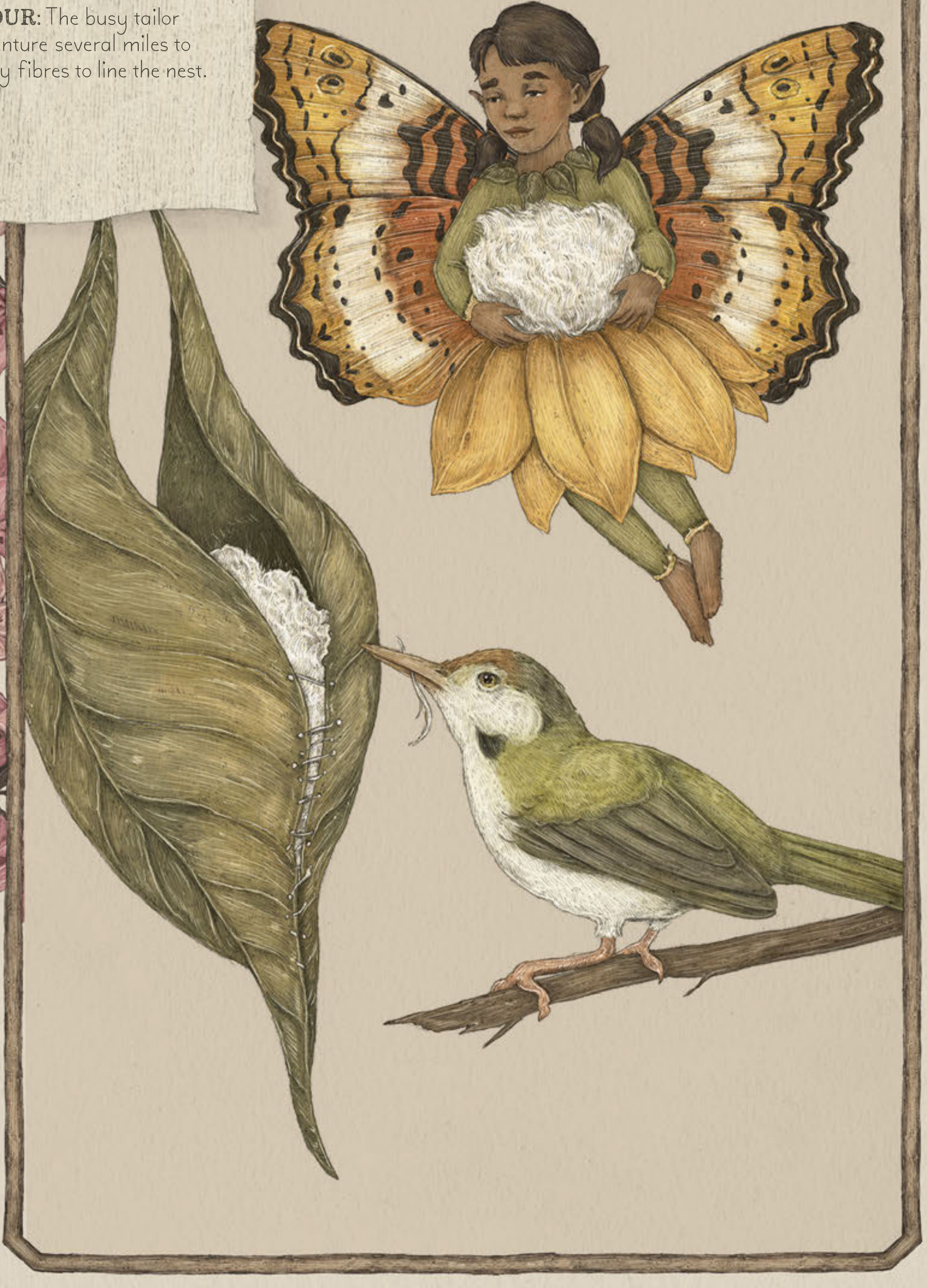
HABITAT: Mountainside forests of Southeast Asia.

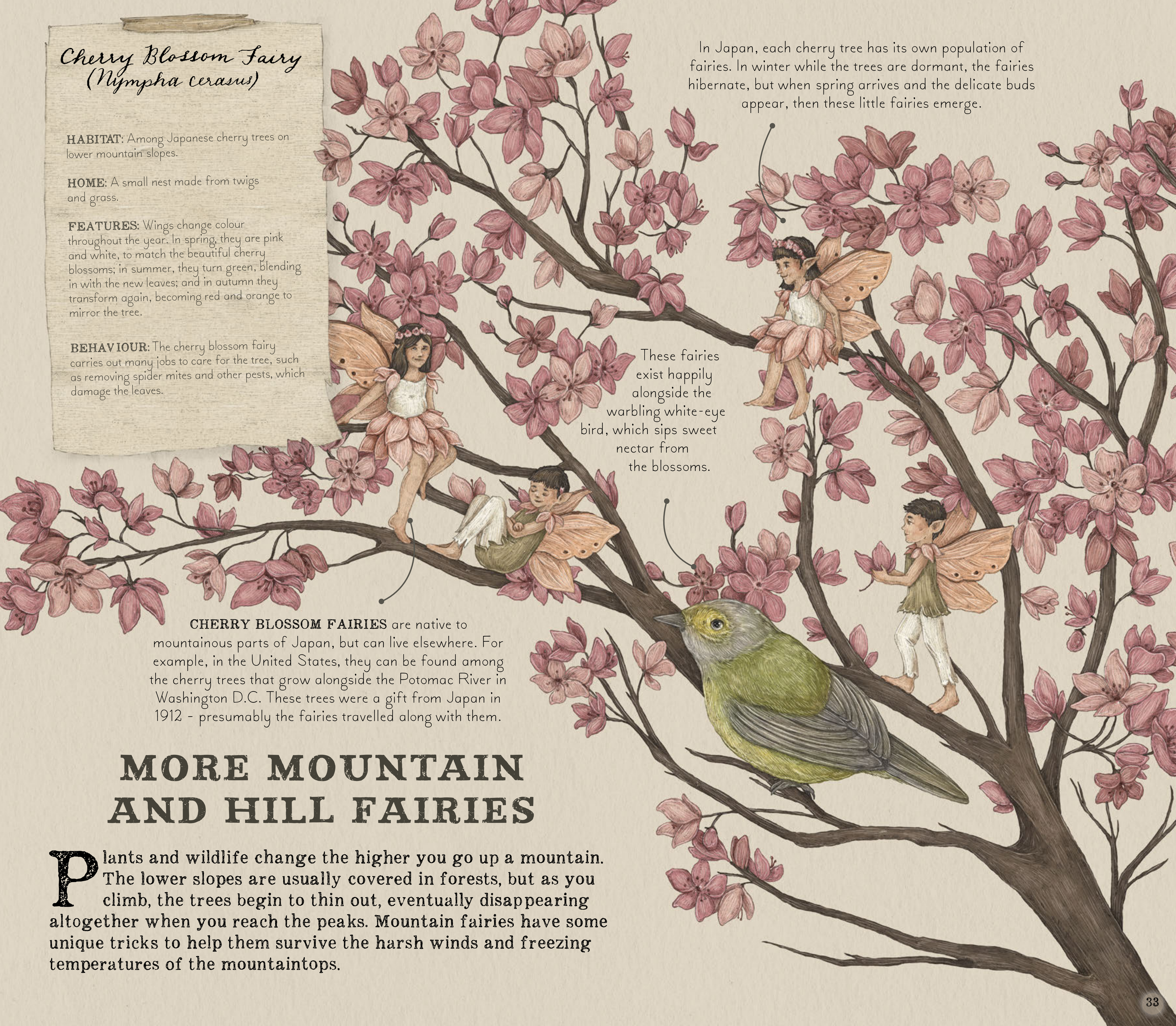
HOME: A nest stitched together from leaves and spider's silk.

FEATURES: Wings are brightly coloured, warning predators that this fairy is poisonous to eat.

BEHAVIOUR: The busy tailor fairy can venture several miles to collect fleecy fibres to line the nest.

The **TAILOR FAIRY** is closely linked with the mountain tailorbird. The fairy helps the bird sew its famous nest together and helps look after the chicks. In return, when the chicks are old enough to fly, the tailor fairy moves in to the nest.





Cherry Blossom Fairy (*Nympha cerasus*)

HABITAT: Among Japanese cherry trees on lower mountain slopes.

HOME: A small nest made from twigs and grass.

FEATURES: Wings change colour throughout the year. In spring, they are pink and white, to match the beautiful cherry blossoms; in summer, they turn green, blending in with the new leaves; and in autumn they transform again, becoming red and orange to mirror the tree.

BEHAVIOUR: The cherry blossom fairy carries out many jobs to care for the tree, such as removing spider mites and other pests, which damage the leaves.

In Japan, each cherry tree has its own population of fairies. In winter while the trees are dormant, the fairies hibernate, but when spring arrives and the delicate buds appear, then these little fairies emerge.

These fairies exist happily alongside the warbling white-eye bird, which sips sweet nectar from the blossoms.

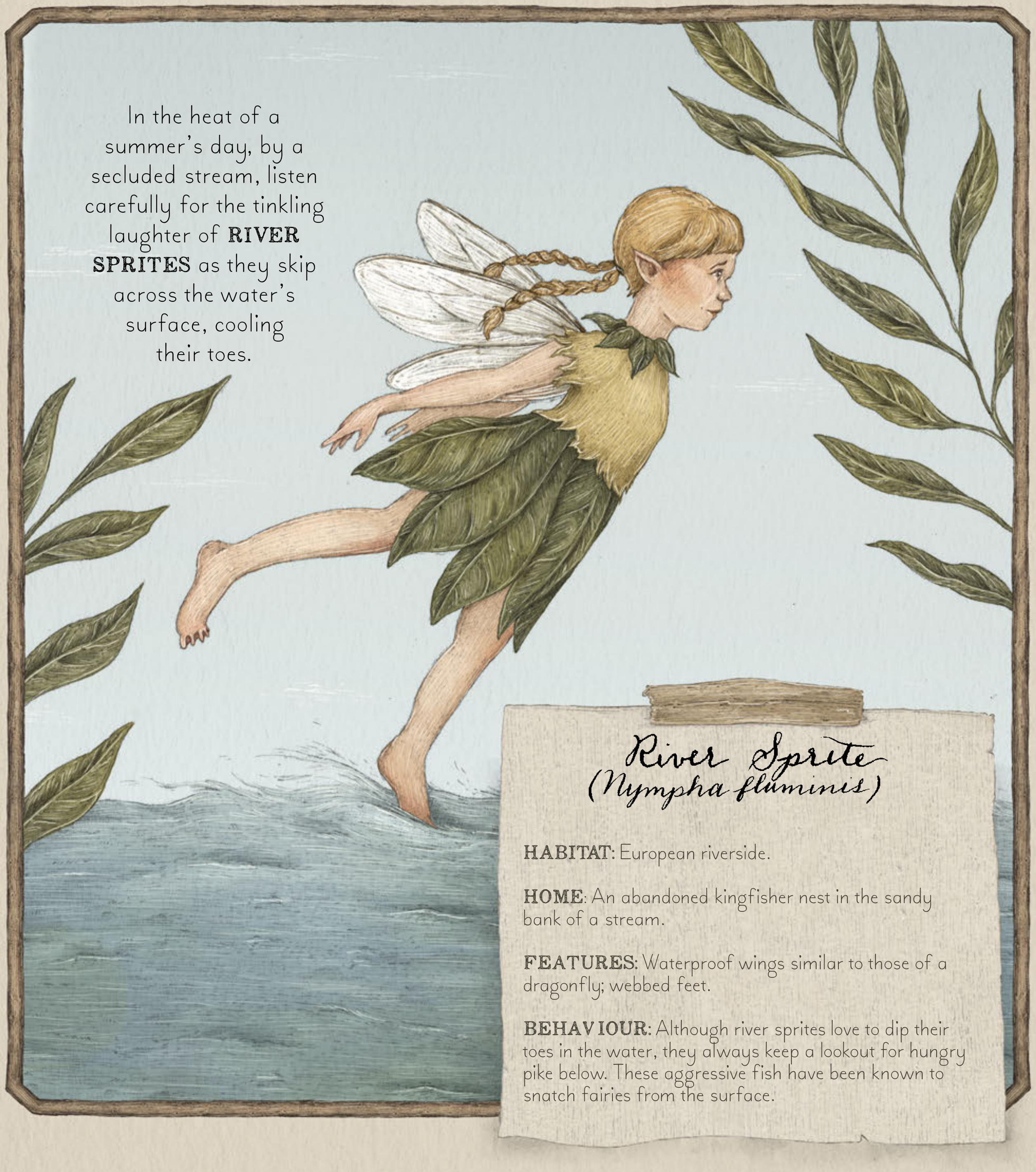
CHERRY BLOSSOM FAIRIES are native to mountainous parts of Japan, but can live elsewhere. For example, in the United States, they can be found among the cherry trees that grow alongside the Potomac River in Washington D.C. These trees were a gift from Japan in 1912 - presumably the fairies travelled along with them.

MORE MOUNTAIN AND HILL FAIRIES

Plants and wildlife change the higher you go up a mountain. The lower slopes are usually covered in forests, but as you climb, the trees begin to thin out, eventually disappearing altogether when you reach the peaks. Mountain fairies have some unique tricks to help them survive the harsh winds and freezing temperatures of the mountaintops.

FRESHWATER FAIRIES

The lakes, rivers and marshes of the world are home to a host of different fairy species. These water-loving fairies have one thing in common: webbed feet. These specially adapted feet help the fairies either swim through the water, or skim along the surface.



In the heat of a summer's day, by a secluded stream, listen carefully for the tinkling laughter of **RIVER SPRITES** as they skip across the water's surface, cooling their toes.

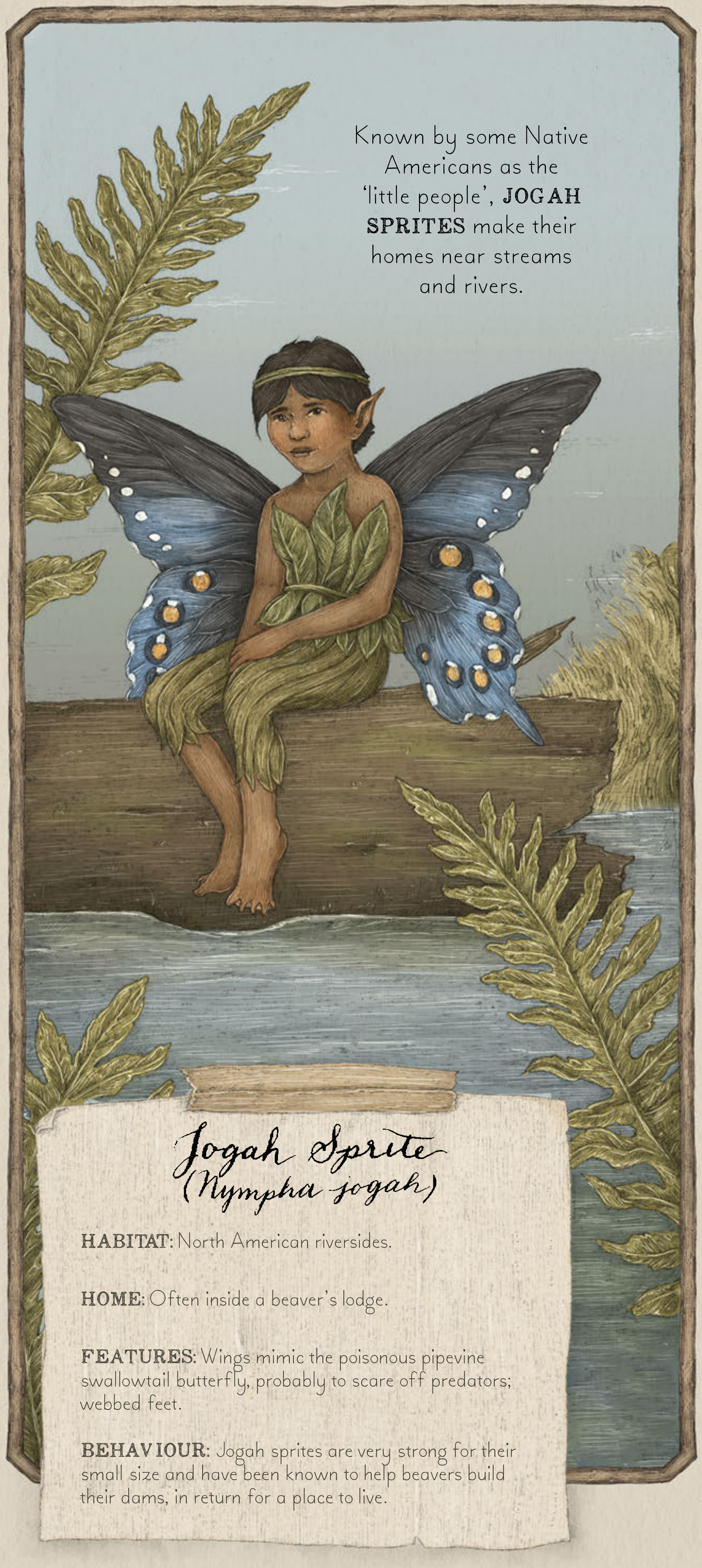
River Sprite (Nympha fluminis)

HABITAT: European riverside.

HOME: An abandoned kingfisher nest in the sandy bank of a stream.

FEATURES: Waterproof wings similar to those of a dragonfly; webbed feet.

BEHAVIOUR: Although river sprites love to dip their toes in the water, they always keep a lookout for hungry pike below. These aggressive fish have been known to snatch fairies from the surface.



Known by some Native Americans as the 'little people', **JOGAH SPRITES** make their homes near streams and rivers.

Jogah Sprite (Nympha jogah)

HABITAT: North American riversides.

HOME: Often inside a beaver's lodge.

FEATURES: Wings mimic the poisonous pipevine swallowtail butterfly, probably to scare off predators; webbed feet.

BEHAVIOUR: Jogah sprites are very strong for their small size and have been known to help beavers build their dams, in return for a place to live.

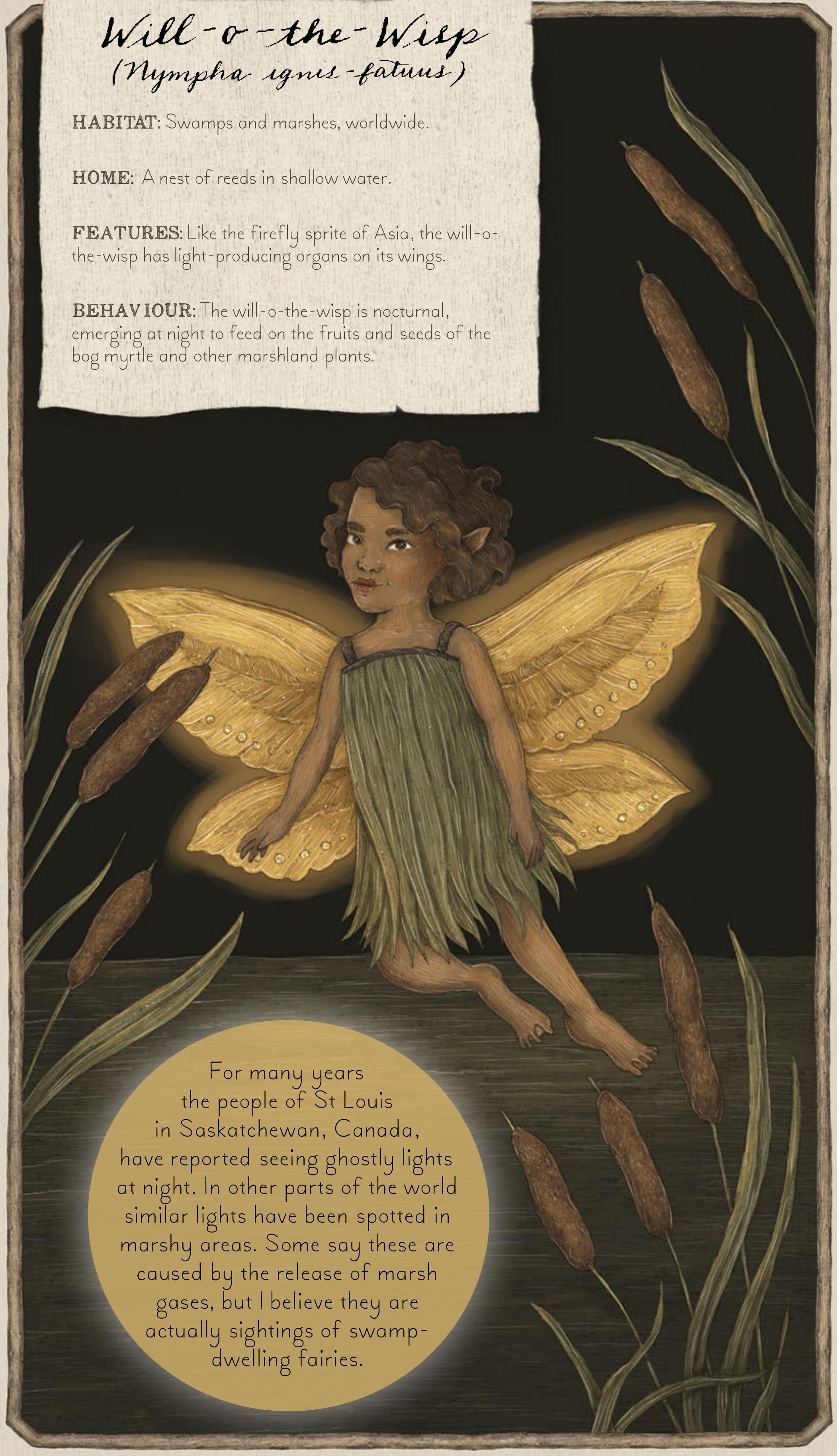
Will-o-the-Wisp
(*Nympha ignis-fatuus*)

HABITAT: Swamps and marshes, worldwide.

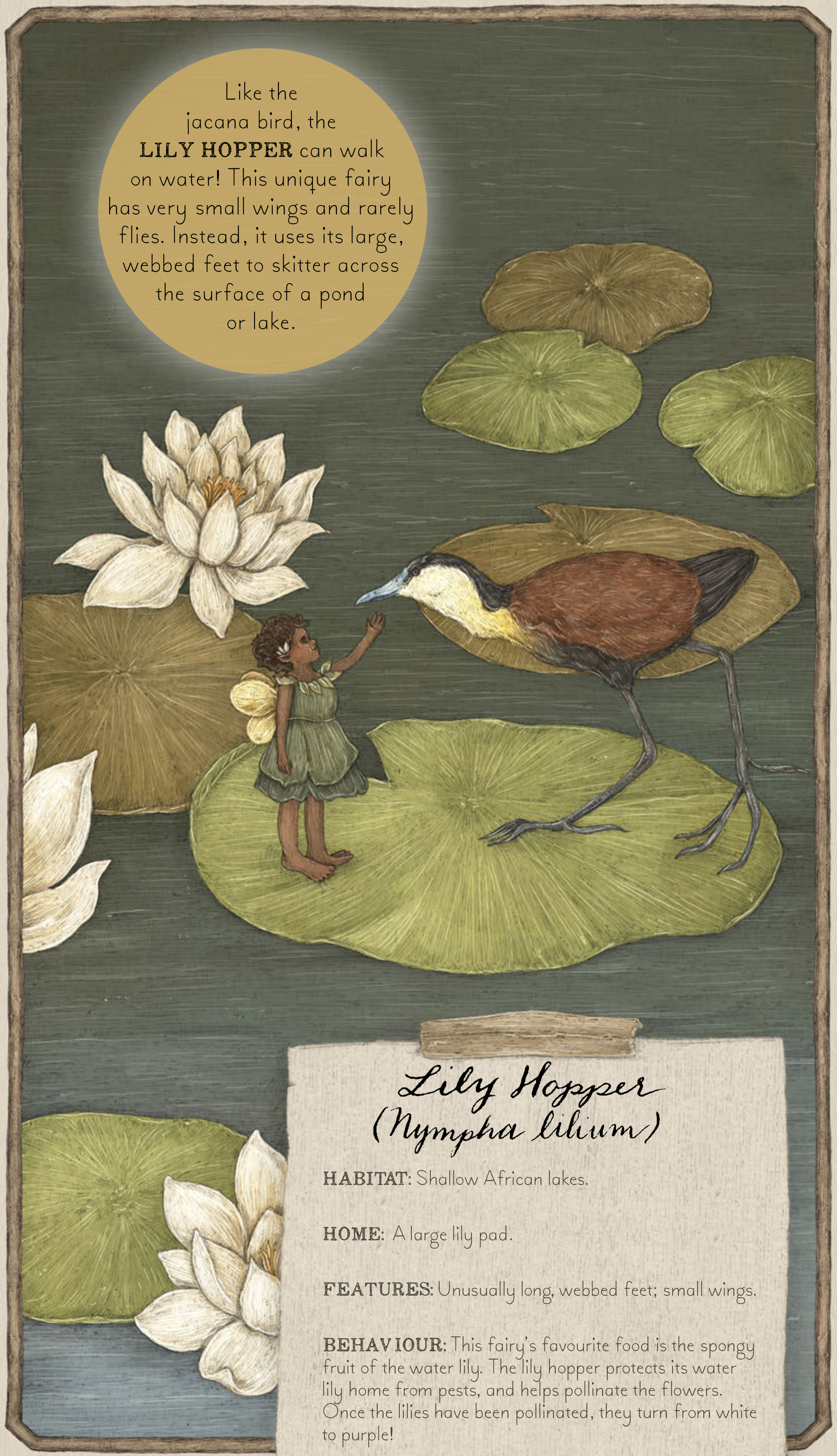
HOME: A nest of reeds in shallow water.

FEATURES: Like the firefly sprite of Asia, the will-o-the-wisp has light-producing organs on its wings.

BEHAVIOUR: The will-o-the-wisp is nocturnal, emerging at night to feed on the fruits and seeds of the bog myrtle and other marshland plants.



For many years the people of St Louis in Saskatchewan, Canada, have reported seeing ghostly lights at night. In other parts of the world similar lights have been spotted in marshy areas. Some say these are caused by the release of marsh gases, but I believe they are actually sightings of swamp-dwelling fairies.



Like the jacana bird, the **LILY HOPPER** can walk on water! This unique fairy has very small wings and rarely flies. Instead, it uses its large, webbed feet to skitter across the surface of a pond or lake.

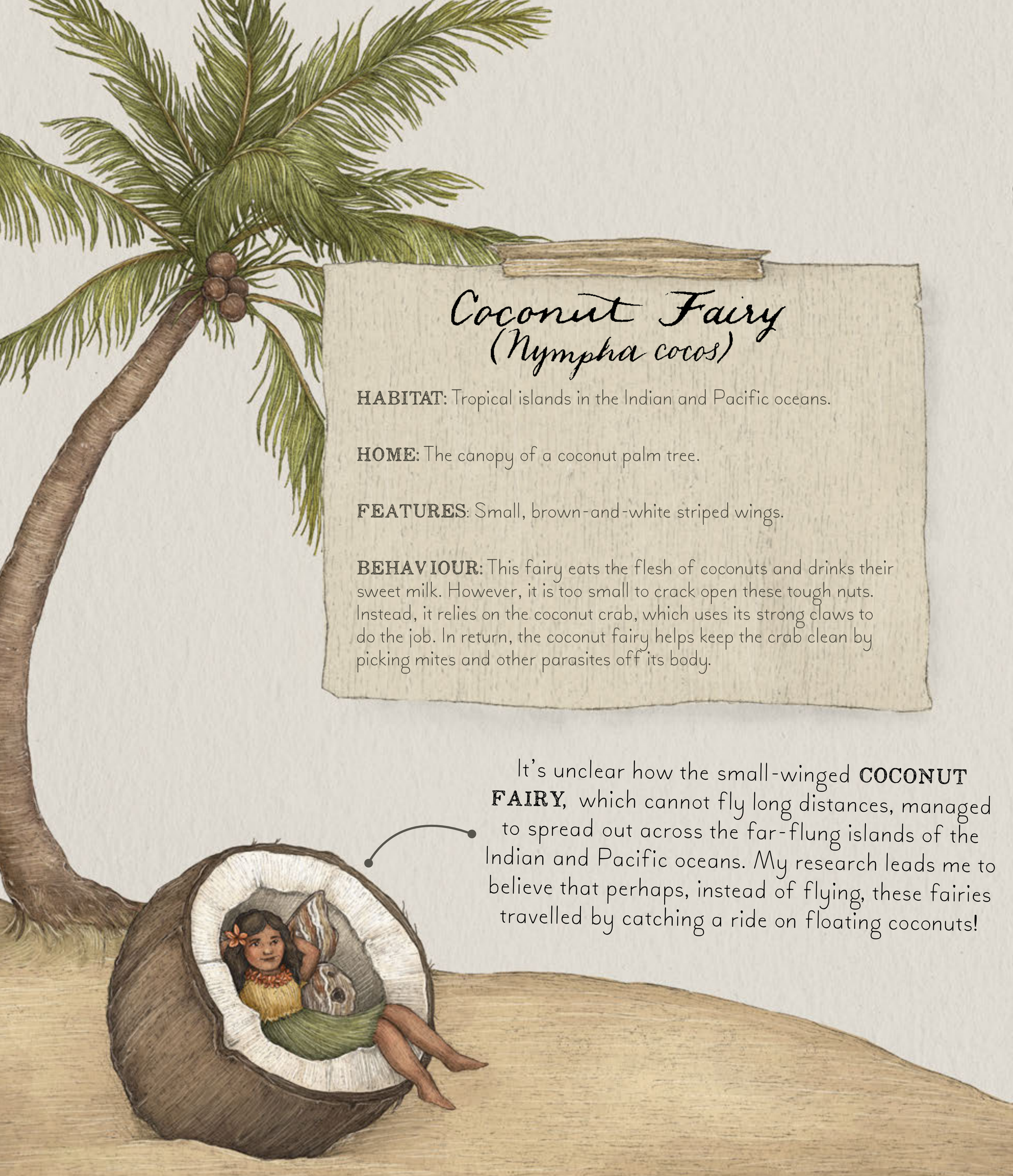
Lily Hopper
(*Nympha lilium*)

HABITAT: Shallow African lakes.

HOME: A large lily pad.

FEATURES: Unusually long, webbed feet; small wings.

BEHAVIOUR: This fairy's favourite food is the spongy fruit of the water lily. The lily hopper protects its water lily home from pests, and helps pollinate the flowers. Once the lilies have been pollinated, they turn from white to purple!



Coconut Fairy
(Nympha cocos)

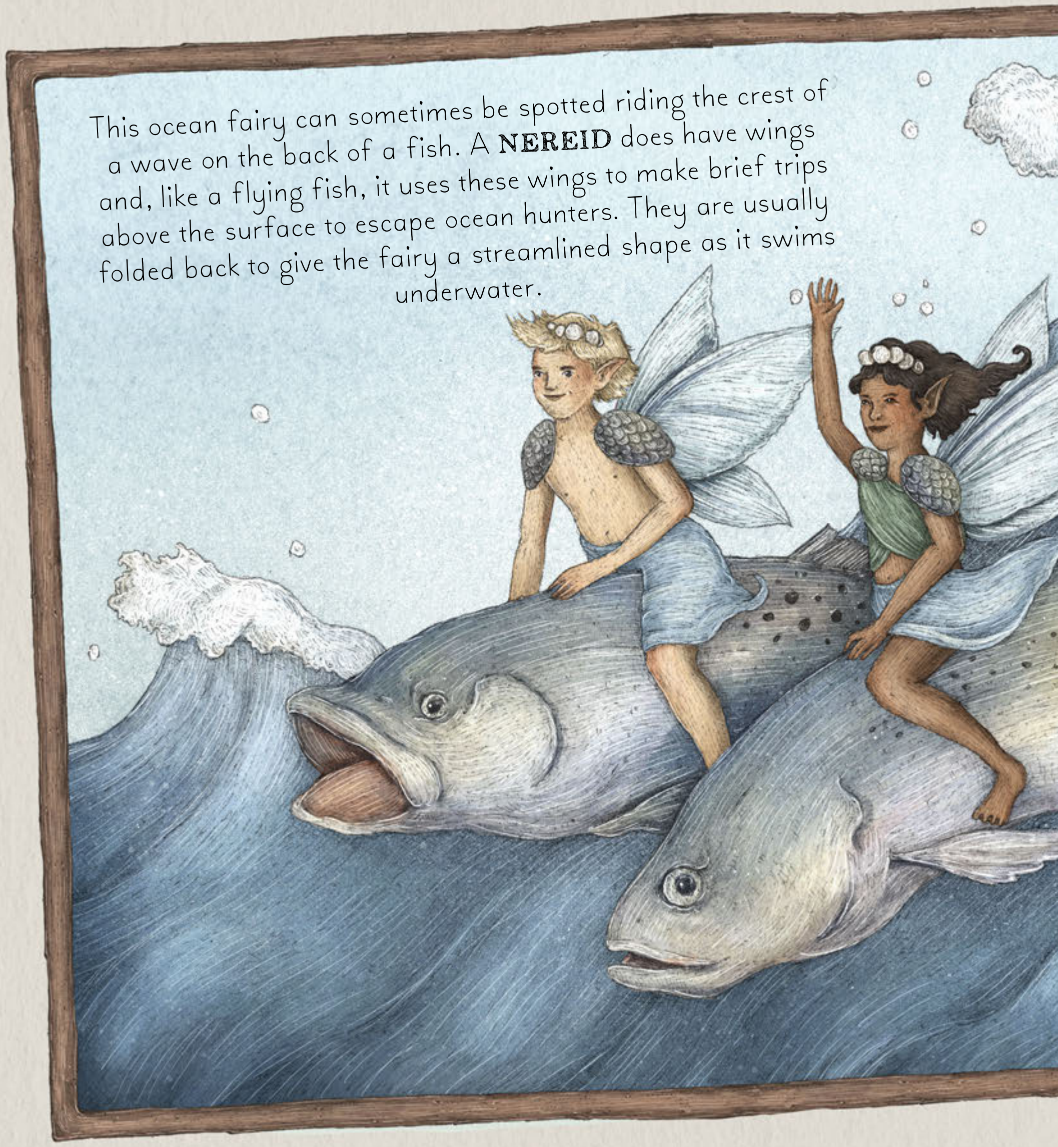
HABITAT: Tropical islands in the Indian and Pacific oceans.

HOME: The canopy of a coconut palm tree.

FEATURES: Small, brown-and-white striped wings.

BEHAVIOUR: This fairy eats the flesh of coconuts and drinks their sweet milk. However, it is too small to crack open these tough nuts. Instead, it relies on the coconut crab, which uses its strong claws to do the job. In return, the coconut fairy helps keep the crab clean by picking mites and other parasites off its body.

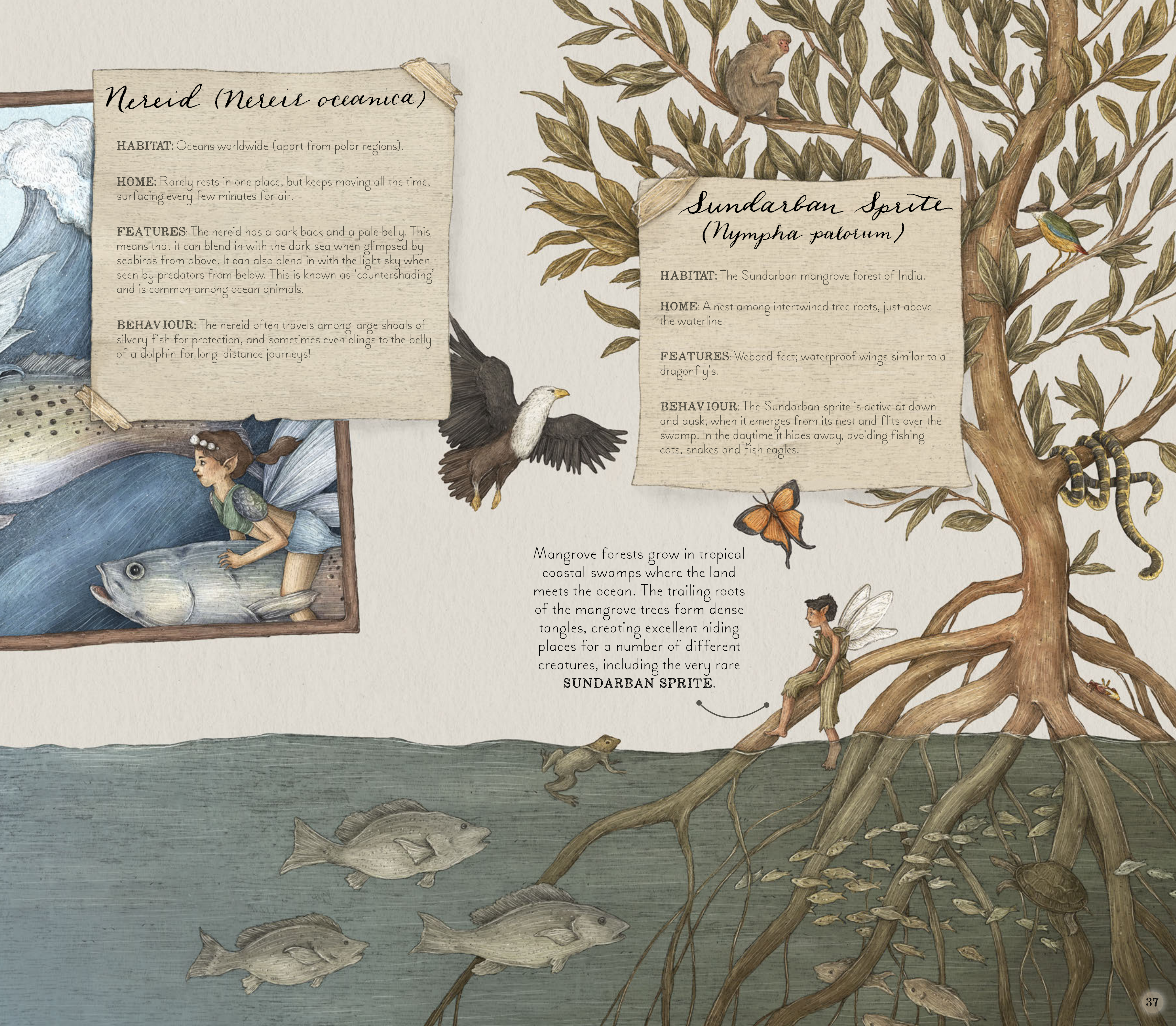
It's unclear how the small-winged **COCONUT FAIRY**, which cannot fly long distances, managed to spread out across the far-flung islands of the Indian and Pacific oceans. My research leads me to believe that perhaps, instead of flying, these fairies travelled by catching a ride on floating coconuts!



This ocean fairy can sometimes be spotted riding the crest of a wave on the back of a fish. A **NEREID** does have wings and, like a flying fish, it uses these wings to make brief trips above the surface to escape ocean hunters. They are usually folded back to give the fairy a streamlined shape as it swims underwater.

MARINE AND COASTAL FAIRIES

Most fairy species I have studied live on land or in freshwater, but there are also some ocean-dwelling fairies. However, because I lack the equipment for a deep-sea expedition, my knowledge of these fairies is limited. Perhaps in the future it will be common for scientists to journey beneath the waves to learn more about the wildlife of the seas?



Nereid (Nereis oceanica)

HABITAT: Oceans worldwide (apart from polar regions).

HOME: Rarely rests in one place, but keeps moving all the time, surfacing every few minutes for air.

FEATURES: The nereid has a dark back and a pale belly. This means that it can blend in with the dark sea when glimpsed by seabirds from above. It can also blend in with the light sky when seen by predators from below. This is known as 'countershading' and is common among ocean animals.

BEHAVIOUR: The nereid often travels among large shoals of silvery fish for protection, and sometimes even clings to the belly of a dolphin for long-distance journeys!

Sundarban Sprite
(Nympha palorum)

HABITAT: The Sundarban mangrove forest of India.

HOME: A nest among intertwined tree roots, just above the waterline.

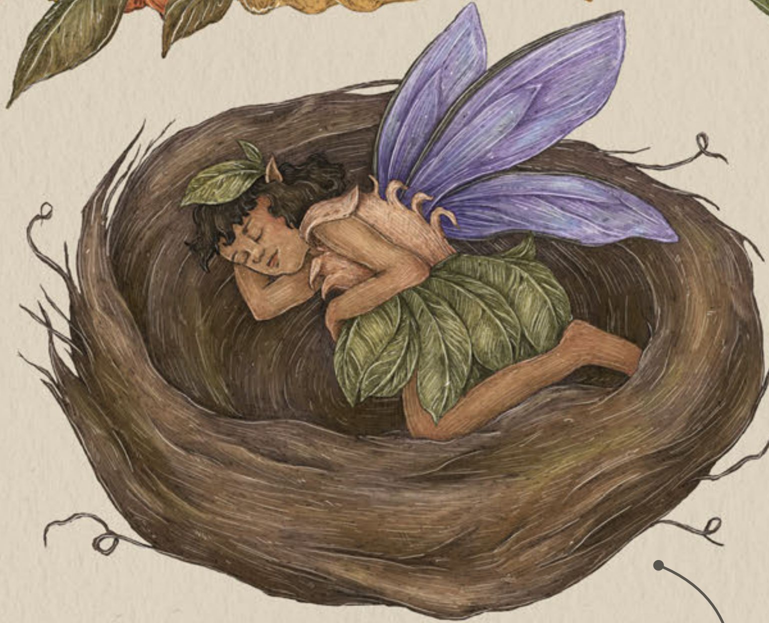
FEATURES: Webbed feet; waterproof wings similar to a dragonfly's.

BEHAVIOUR: The Sundarban sprite is active at dawn and dusk, when it emerges from its nest and flits over the swamp. In the daytime it hides away, avoiding fishing cats, snakes and fish eagles.

Mangrove forests grow in tropical coastal swamps where the land meets the ocean. The trailing roots of the mangrove trees form dense tangles, creating excellent hiding places for a number of different creatures, including the very rare **SUNDARBAN SPRITE**.

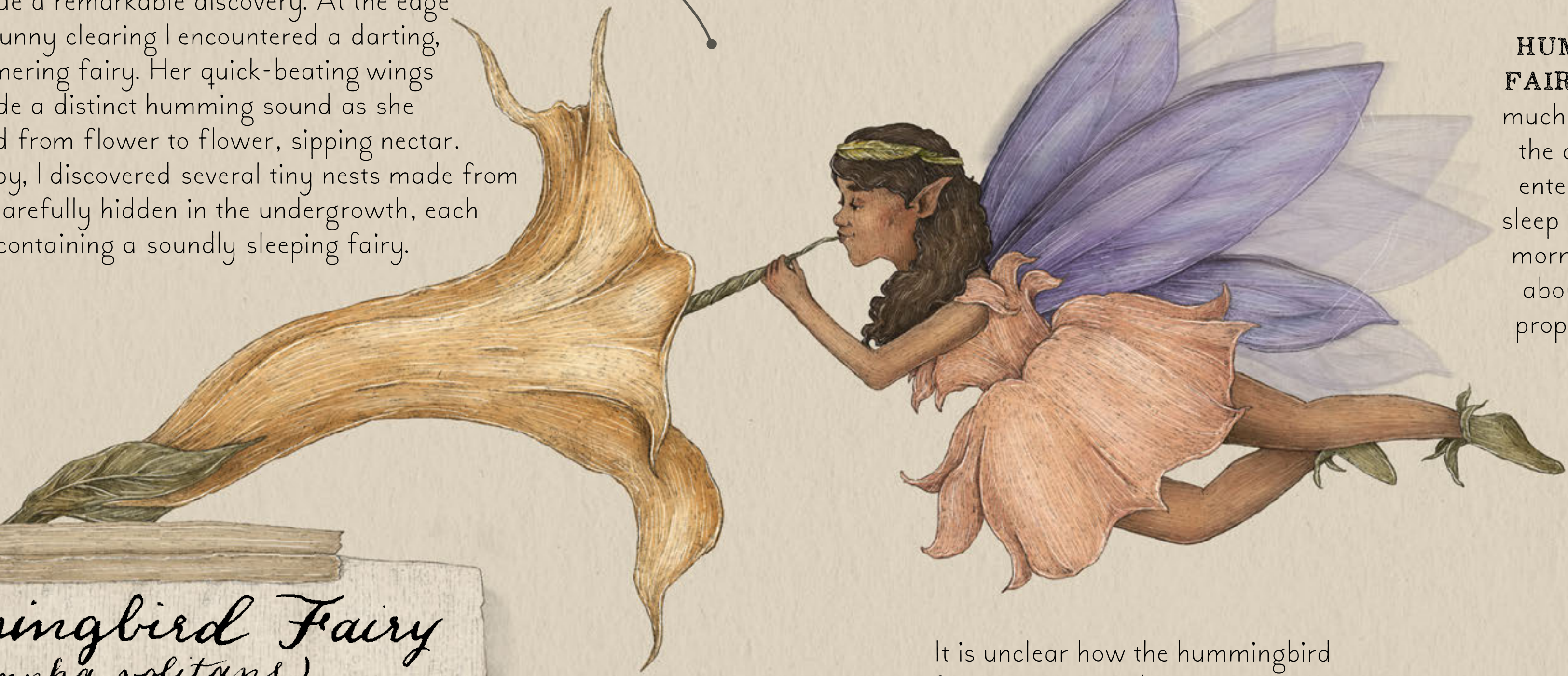
JUNGLE FAIRIES

The Amazon Rainforest is a remarkable place, bursting with life. This tropical habitat is packed full of lush plants that provide food and shelter for thousands of different types of animal. These pages contain just a glimpse of the Amazon's fairy folk. My research has only scratched the surface and I'm quite sure there must be many more fairy species in the rainforest, as yet undiscovered.



On my last trip to the Amazon Rainforest, I made a remarkable discovery. At the edge of a sunny clearing I encountered a darting, shimmering fairy. Her quick-beating wings made a distinct humming sound as she flitted from flower to flower, sipping nectar. Close by, I discovered several tiny nests made from silk, carefully hidden in the undergrowth, each containing a soundly sleeping fairy.

HUMMINGBIRD FAIRIES use up so much energy during the day that they enter a very deep sleep at night. In the morning, they take about an hour to properly wake up.



It is unclear how the hummingbird fairy manages to beat its wings so much more quickly than other fairies. This intriguing species warrants further research!

Hummingbird Fairy
(Nympha volitans)

HABITAT: Amazon Rainforest, South America.

HOME: A tiny nest made from grasses and spider's silk.

FEATURES: Shimmering, jewel-like wings.

BEHAVIOUR: Just like hummingbirds, these fairies are very agile fliers: they can fly forwards, backwards, sideways and even upside down! Their wings beat countless times a second – too fast for the eye to see. They spend their days visiting hundreds, if not thousands, of trumpet-shaped flowers, sipping nectar using a grass straw.

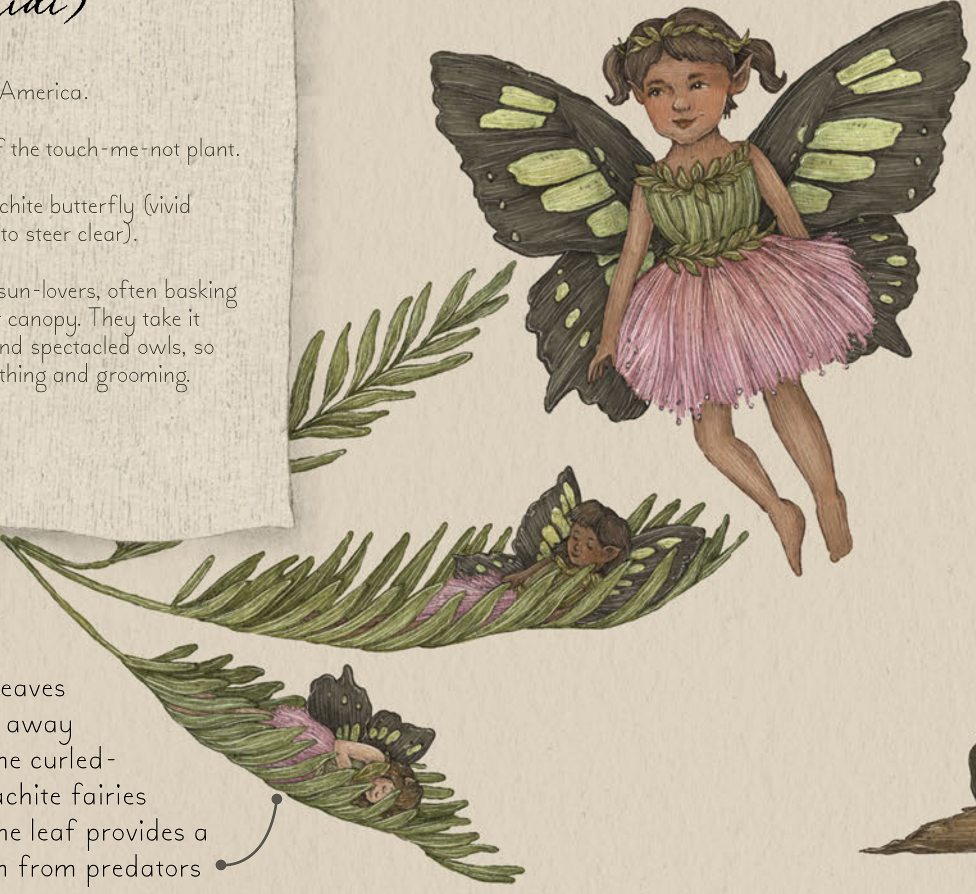
Malachite Fairy
(Nympha viridi)

HABITAT: Amazon Rainforest, South America.

HOME: Sleeps in the curled-up leaves of the touch-me-not plant.

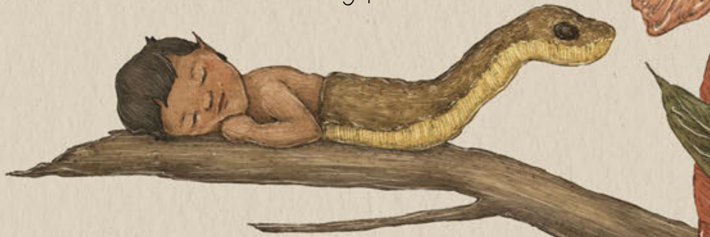
FEATURES: Wings similar to the malachite butterfly (vivid markings warn snakes and birds of prey to steer clear).

BEHAVIOUR: These social fairies are sun-lovers, often basking on leaves right at the top of the rainforest canopy. They take it in turns to keep watch for harpy eagles and spectacled owls, so others can enjoy feeding on fruits, sunbathing and grooming.

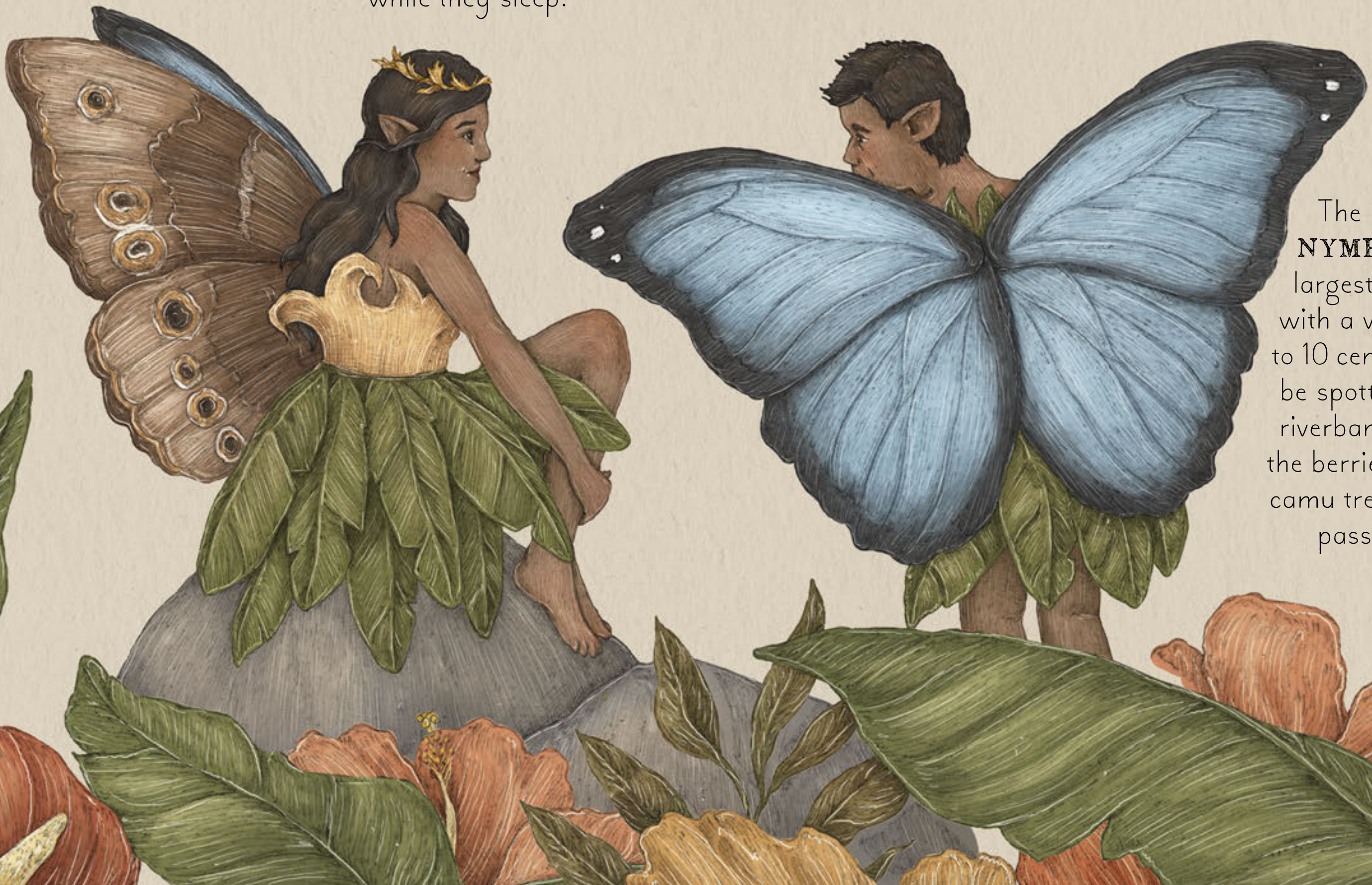


The **MALACHITE FAIRY** often wears clothes stitched from beautiful rainforest blooms.

The touch-me-not plant closes up its leaves if anything brushes them, to frighten away hungry insects. If you look closely at the curled-up fronds you might find clever malachite fairies dozing in these leafy sleeping bags! The leaf provides a comfy place to rest and protects them from predators while they sleep.



The tail of the **RAINFOREST NYMPH** flutterpillar looks very similar to a snake's head, complete with frightening eyespots! This is very useful for frightening away predators.



The **RAINFOREST NYMPH** is one of the largest fairy species, with a wingspan of up to 10 centimetres. It can be spotted near jungle riverbanks, grazing on the berries of the camu camu tree or on sweet passion fruits.

Rainforest Nymph
(Nympha amazonia)

HABITAT: Amazon Rainforest, South America.

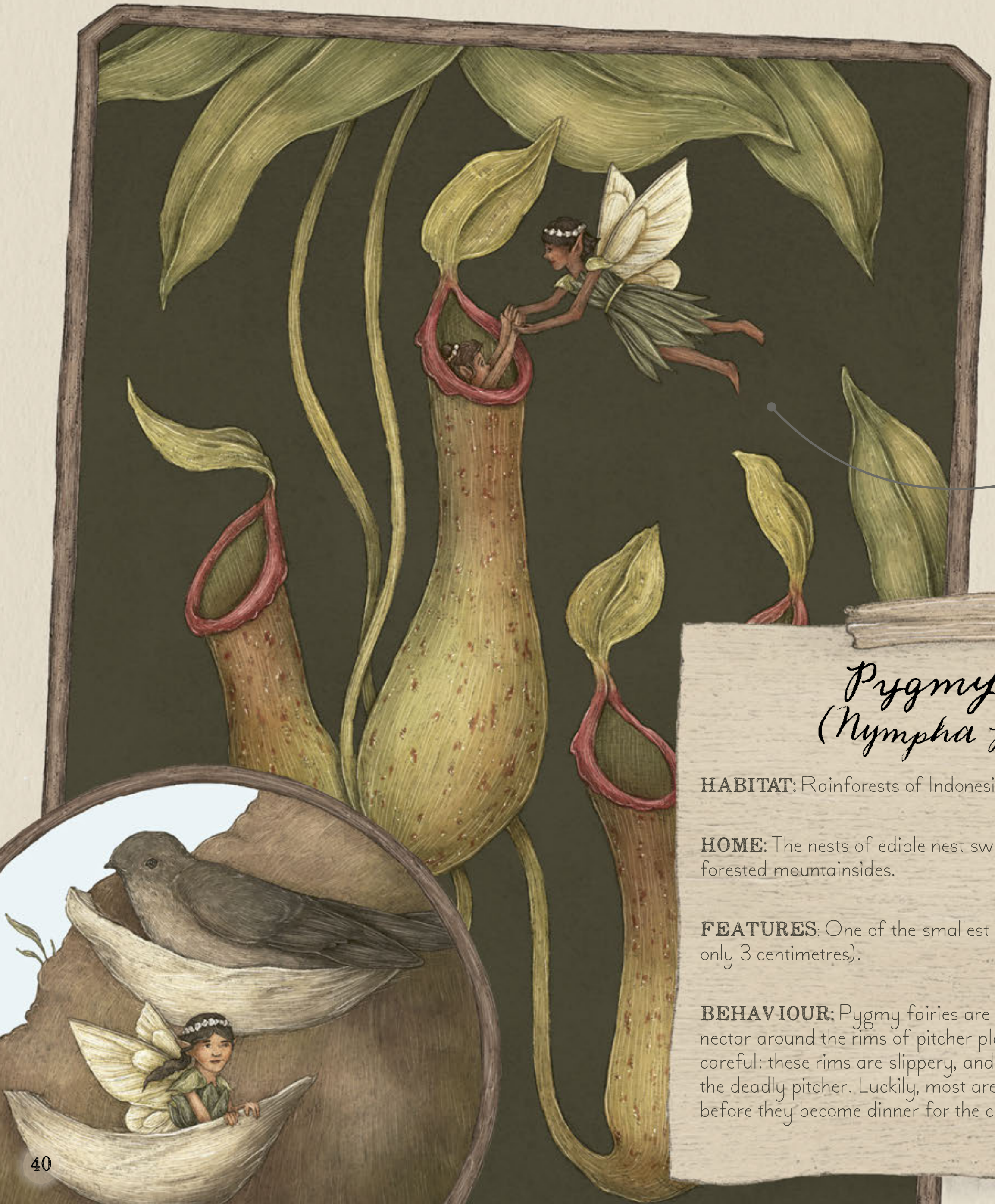
HOME: A treetop nest close to water.

FEATURES: Shimmering blue wings, remarkably similar to the blue morpho butterfly.

BEHAVIOUR: The rainforest nymph has a clever method of hiding itself away. When it feels threatened, it closes up its dazzling wings, revealing the brown, mottled undersides. These allow it to blend in with tree branches and dead leaves.

MORE JUNGLE FAIRIES

The Amazon is not the only rainforest full of fairy surprises. Jungle-dwelling fairies live elsewhere in the world, too, such as the lush green islands of Indonesia, the rainforests of mainland Africa and Madagascar, and the tropical jungles of India. If you know where to look, fairies can be found throughout these rich habitats, from damp forest floors to sunny treetop canopies.



These tiny fairies are endangered because their nests are at risk. **PYGMY FAIRIES** live alongside edible nest swiftlets: a type of bird found in Southeast Asia. However, the swiftlets' nests (made of solidified saliva) are being harvested by humans at an alarming rate. This is because they are used to make a local delicacy: bird's nest soup.

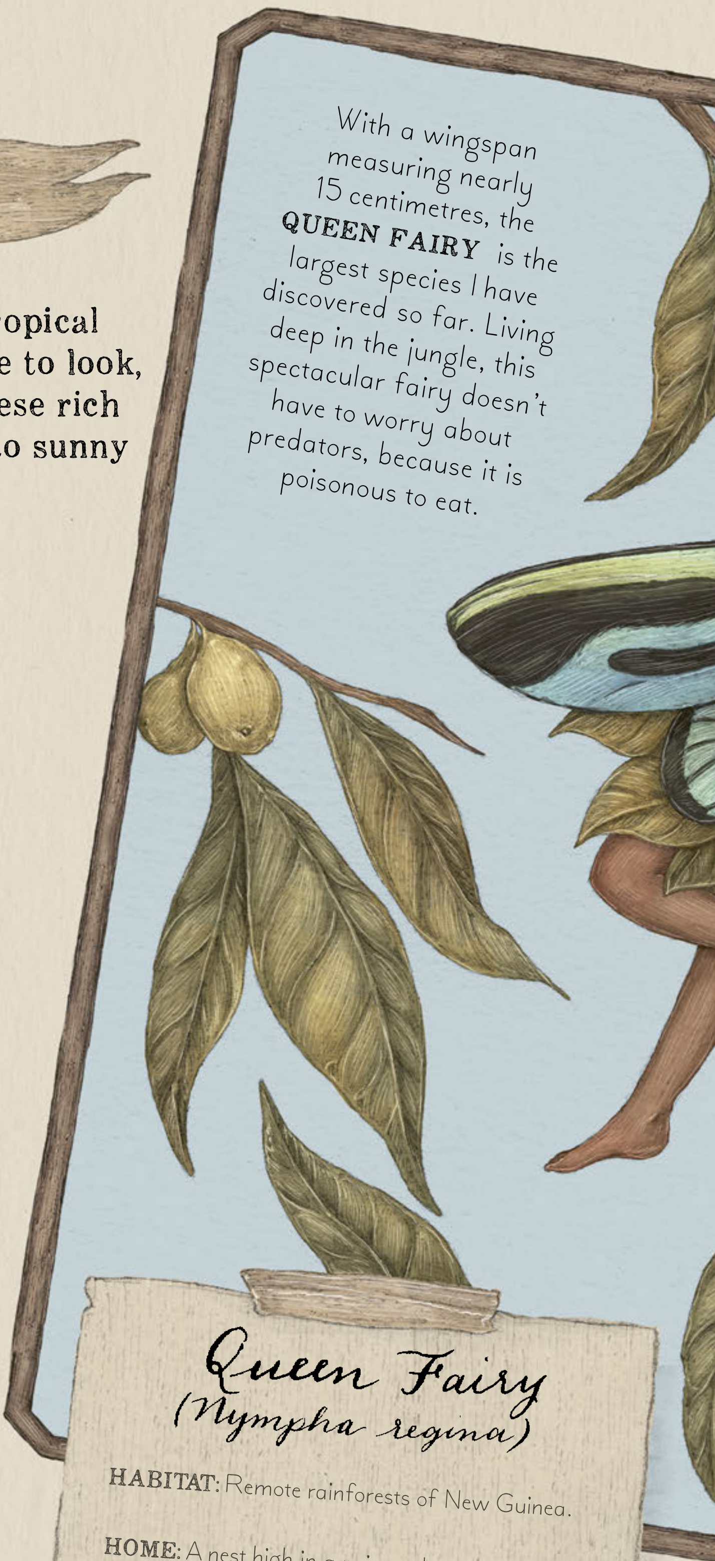
Pygmy Fairy
(Nympha pumilia)

HABITAT: Rainforests of Indonesia.

HOME: The nests of edible nest swiftlets, found in caves on forested mountainsides.

FEATURES: One of the smallest fairy species (wingspan measures only 3 centimetres).

BEHAVIOUR: Pygmy fairies are particularly attracted by the nectar around the rims of pitcher plants. However, they must be very careful: these rims are slippery, and unlucky fairies can tumble into the deadly pitcher. Luckily, most are fished out by passing friends before they become dinner for the carnivorous plant!



With a wingspan measuring nearly 15 centimetres, the **QUEEN FAIRY** is the largest species I have discovered so far. Living deep in the jungle, this spectacular fairy doesn't have to worry about predators, because it is poisonous to eat.

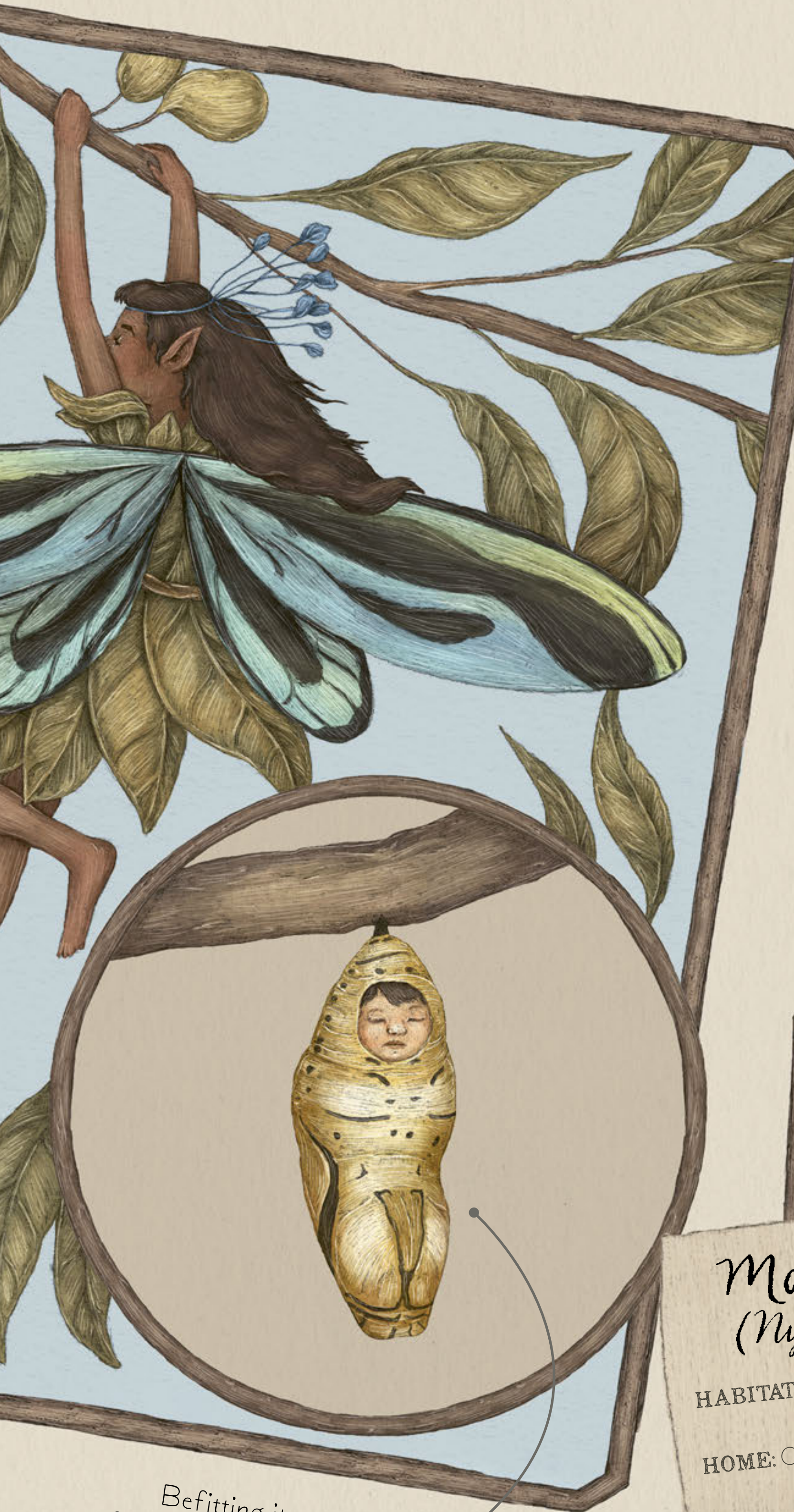
Queen Fairy
(Nympha regina)

HABITAT: Remote rainforests of New Guinea.

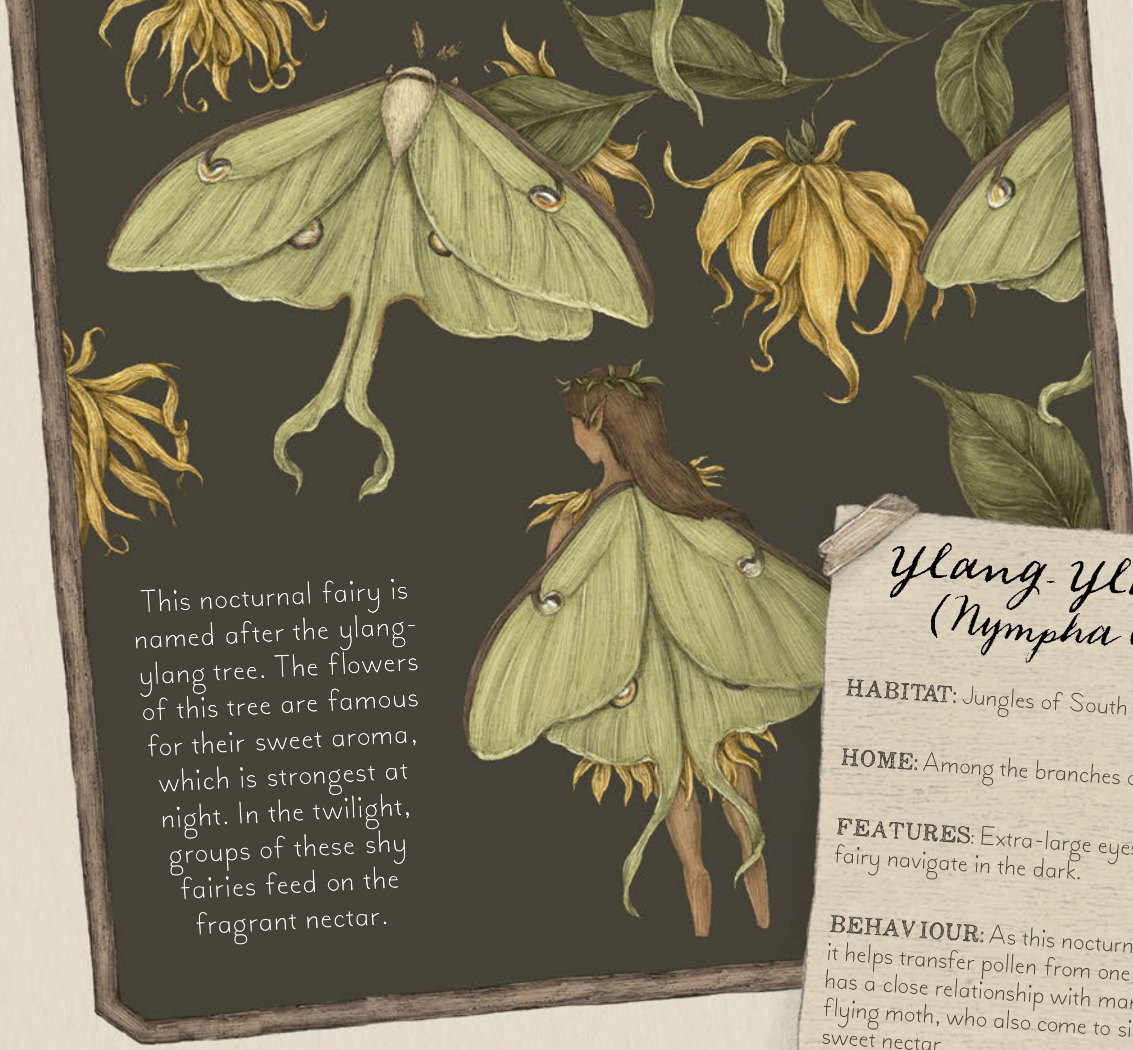
HOME: A nest high in a poison-dart tree.

FEATURES: Wings resemble the world's largest butterfly (the Queen Alexandra's birdwing); headdress made from bird-of-paradise feathers.

BEHAVIOUR: These fairies have a peculiar diet: they drink the sap of the poison-dart tree! Incredibly, they seem to be immune to this toxic substance. What's more, it makes the fairies poisonous, which is handy for putting off hunters.



Befitting its royal name, the queen fairy flutterpillar has a golden cocoon! This isn't really made from gold, but from a substance called 'chitin'. This is the same stuff that gives jewel beetles their metallic sheen. This gleaming cocoon reflects the colours around it, making it difficult for snakes and hungry birds to spot it.



This nocturnal fairy is named after the ylang-ylang tree. The flowers of this tree are famous for their sweet aroma, which is strongest at night. In the twilight, groups of these shy fairies feed on the fragrant nectar.

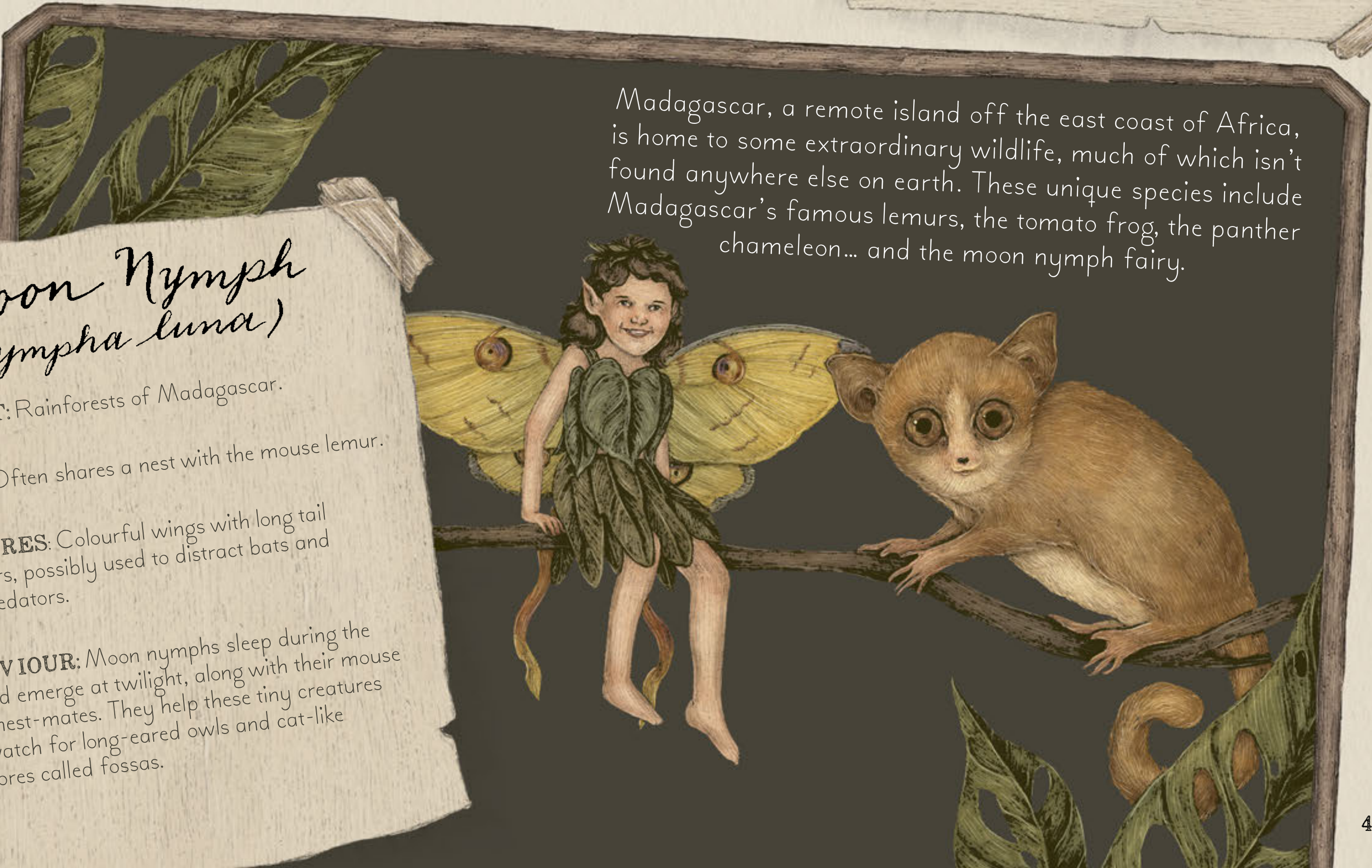
Ylang-Ylang Fairy
(Nympha cananga)

HABITAT: Jungles of South Asia.

HOME: Among the branches of the ylang-ylang tree.

FEATURES: Extra-large eyes and ears help the fairy navigate in the dark.

BEHAVIOUR: As this nocturnal fairy flits around, it helps transfer pollen from one flower to another. It has a close relationship with many types of night-flying moth, who also come to sip the ylang-ylang's sweet nectar.



Madagascar, a remote island off the east coast of Africa, is home to some extraordinary wildlife, much of which isn't found anywhere else on earth. These unique species include Madagascar's famous lemurs, the tomato frog, the panther chameleon... and the moon nymph fairy.

Moon Nymph
(Nympha luna)

HABITAT: Rainforests of Madagascar.

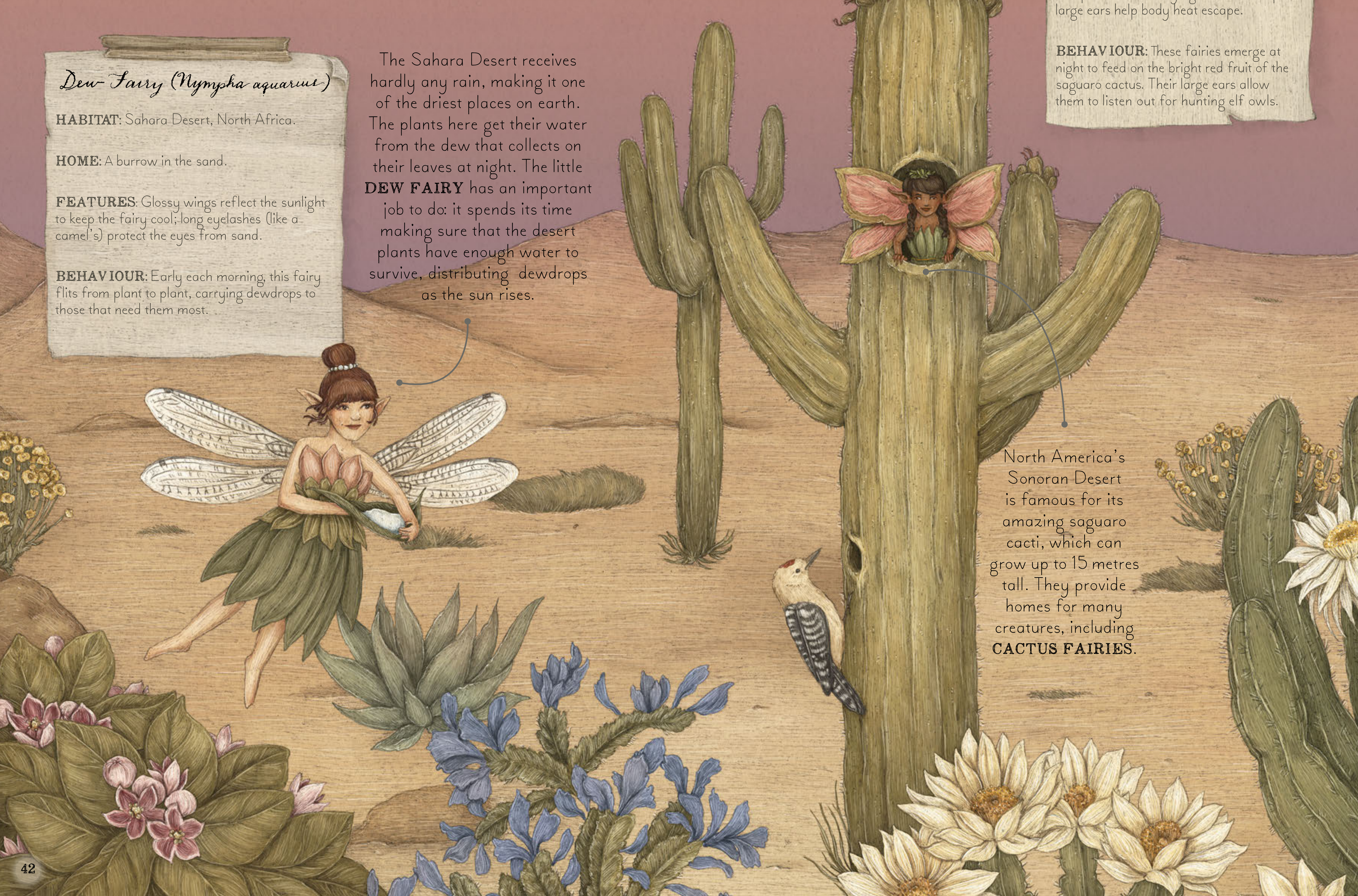
HOME: Often shares a nest with the mouse lemur.

FEATURES: Colourful wings with long tail streamers, possibly used to distract bats and other predators.

BEHAVIOUR: Moon nymphs sleep during the day and emerge at twilight, along with their mouse lemur nest-mates. They help these tiny creatures keep watch for long-eared owls and cat-like carnivores called fossas.

DESERT AND SAVANNAH FAIRIES

Deserts may appear to be barren wastelands, but if you look closely you'll find a surprising amount of wildlife: birds, insects, reptiles – and yes, even fairies! Deserts are places of extremes, so the creatures that live here have to be tough to survive. The temperatures soar during the day and plummet at night. Because of the heat, many desert fairies sleep in the day and come out at night-time.



Dew Fairy (Nympha aquarius)

HABITAT: Sahara Desert, North Africa.

HOME: A burrow in the sand.

FEATURES: Glossy wings reflect the sunlight to keep the fairy cool; long eyelashes (like a camel's) protect the eyes from sand.

BEHAVIOUR: Early each morning, this fairy flits from plant to plant, carrying dewdrops to those that need them most.

The Sahara Desert receives hardly any rain, making it one of the driest places on earth. The plants here get their water from the dew that collects on their leaves at night. The little **DEW FAIRY** has an important job to do: it spends its time making sure that the desert plants have enough water to survive, distributing dewdrops as the sun rises.

Cactus Fairy (Nympha sonora)

HABITAT: Sonoran Desert, United States and Mexico.

HOME: A hole in a cactus left by a gila woodpecker.

FEATURES: Thick skin on the hands and feet protects the fairy against cactus spines; large ears help body heat escape.

BEHAVIOUR: These fairies emerge at night to feed on the bright red fruit of the saguaro cactus. Their large ears allow them to listen out for hunting elf owls.

North America's Sonoran Desert is famous for its amazing saguaro cacti, which can grow up to 15 metres tall. They provide homes for many creatures, including **CACTUS FAIRIES**.

Queen of the Night (Nympha cereus)

HABITAT: Chihuahuan Desert, United States and Mexico.

HOME: A burrow at the base of the cereus cactus.

FEATURES: Beautiful wings resemble the petals of the cereus flower.

BEHAVIOUR: This fairy is very difficult to spot, emerging only when the cereus flowers bloom.

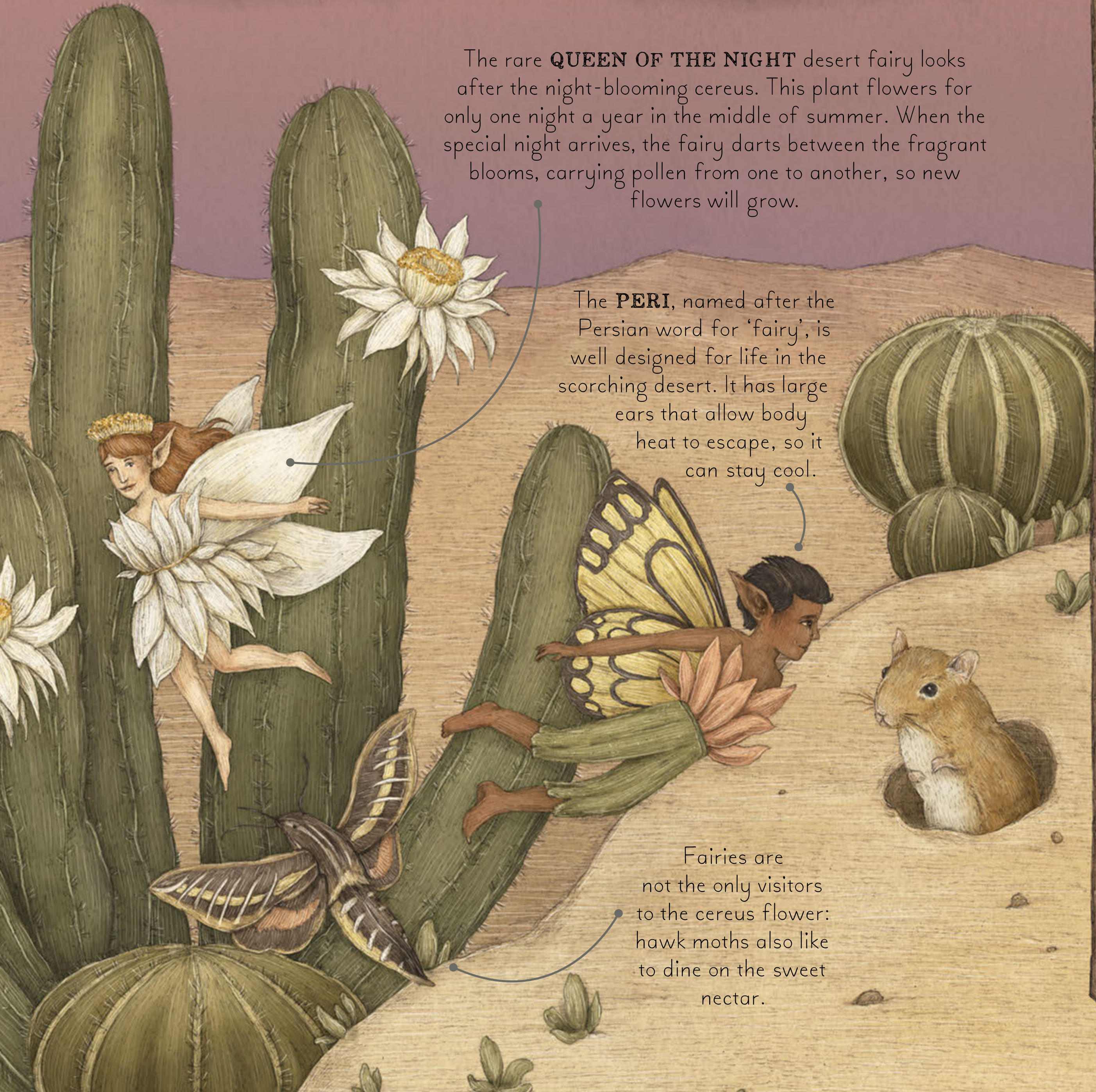
Peri (Nympha peri)

HABITAT: Great Salt Desert, Persia.

HOME: Shares a burrow with a family of Persian jirds, which are relatives of gerbils.

FEATURES: Large ears and large eyes for seeing in the dark.

BEHAVIOUR: The peri helps the Persian jird guard its nest, keeping watch for sand boas, horned vipers and other snakes. It rests during the heat of the day, coming out at dawn and dusk.



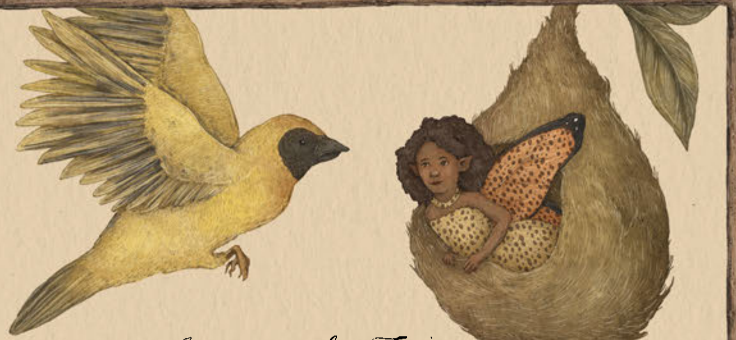
The rare **QUEEN OF THE NIGHT** desert fairy looks after the night-blooming cereus. This plant flowers for only one night a year in the middle of summer. When the special night arrives, the fairy darts between the fragrant blooms, carrying pollen from one to another, so new flowers will grow.

The **PERI**, named after the Persian word for 'fairy', is well designed for life in the scorching desert. It has large ears that allow body heat to escape, so it can stay cool.

Fairies are not the only visitors to the cereus flower: hawk moths also like to dine on the sweet nectar.

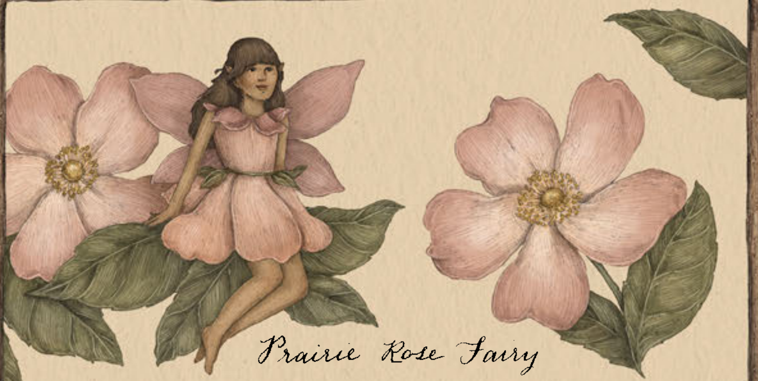
FAIRIES OF THE SAVANNAH

The grasslands of the world, from tropical African savannahs to the cooler steppes of Asia, are home to some remarkable fairies.



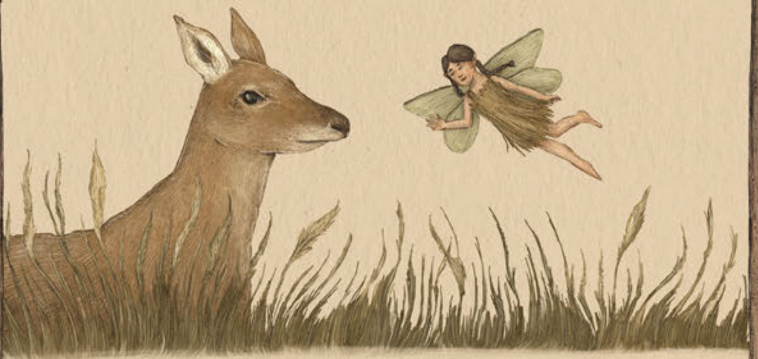
Savannah Fairy

This sociable African fairy often makes its home in an abandoned termite mound, or in the nest of a weaver bird.



Prairie Rose Fairy

In the grasslands of the United States, you might be lucky enough to see this fairy flitting among the flowers of the prairie rose.



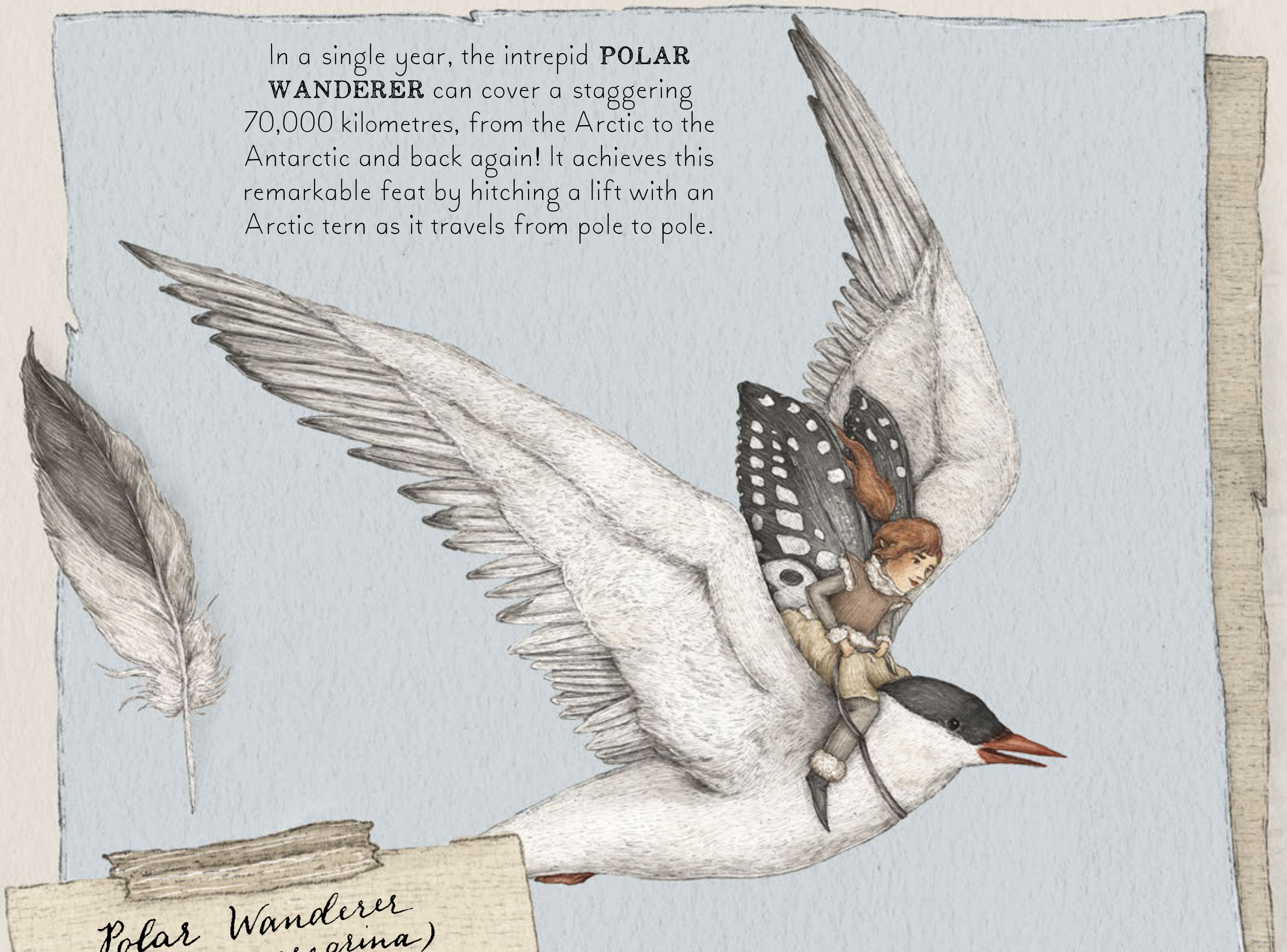
Steppe Sprite

On the rolling steppes of Russia and Mongolia, this shy fairy is very well concealed among the waving grasses.

POLAR FAIRIES

There are some hardy fairies who can survive even the icy extremes of the North and South poles. These resilient creatures face gale-force winds, freezing temperatures and winter darkness for months on end.

So far, I have carried out several fascinating research trips to the Arctic regions, but only one to Antarctica (as part of an expedition team investigating emperor penguins).



In a single year, the intrepid **POLAR WANDERER** can cover a staggering 70,000 kilometres, from the Arctic to the Antarctic and back again! It achieves this remarkable feat by hitching a lift with an Arctic tern as it travels from pole to pole.

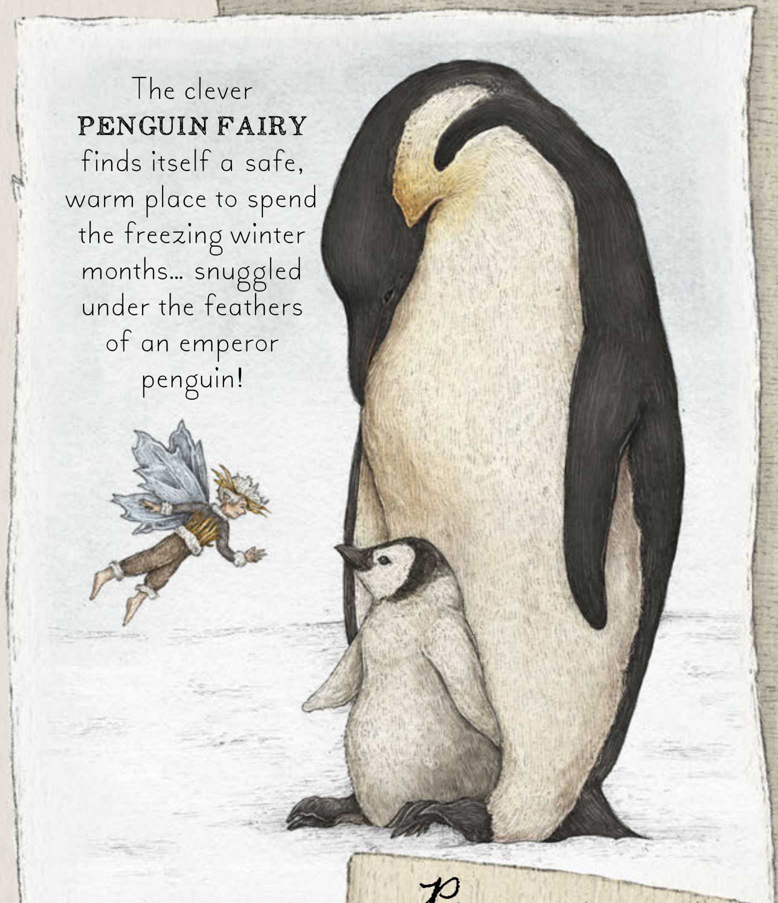
Polar Wanderer (Nympha peregrina)

HABITAT: Rocky islands and beaches in polar regions.

HOME: A shallow nest lined with moss and grass.

FEATURES: Black-and-white wings camouflage the fairy among a flock of Arctic terns.

BEHAVIOUR: This fairy has a very close relationship with the Arctic tern, riding on its back. In return, the fairy grooms the tern, keeping its feathers free from lice and fleas.



The clever **PENGUIN FAIRY** finds itself a safe, warm place to spend the freezing winter months... snuggled under the feathers of an emperor penguin!

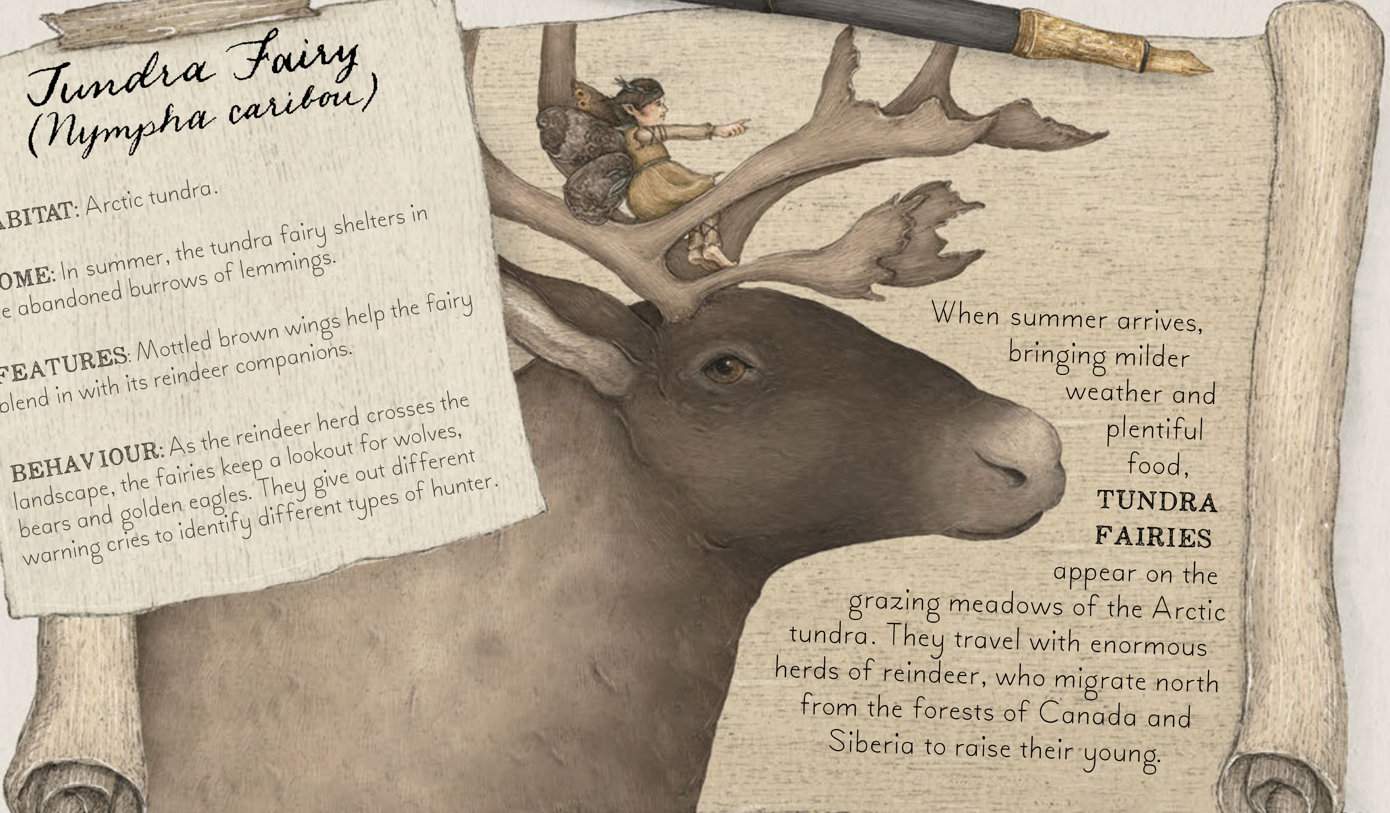
Penguin Fairy (Nympha antarctica)

HABITAT: Antarctic ice shelves.

HOME: Under the feathery brood patch of a male emperor penguin.

FEATURES: Clothing made from warm penguin feathers; wings look like ice crystals.

BEHAVIOUR: Each winter, male emperor penguins keep their eggs warm in a cosy brood patch, balanced on their feet. The penguin fairy huddles on top of the egg, and hibernates there for four months until the egg hatches. When the chick emerges, the fairy helps look after it, keeping watch for marauding skuas.



Tundra Fairy
(Nympha caribou)

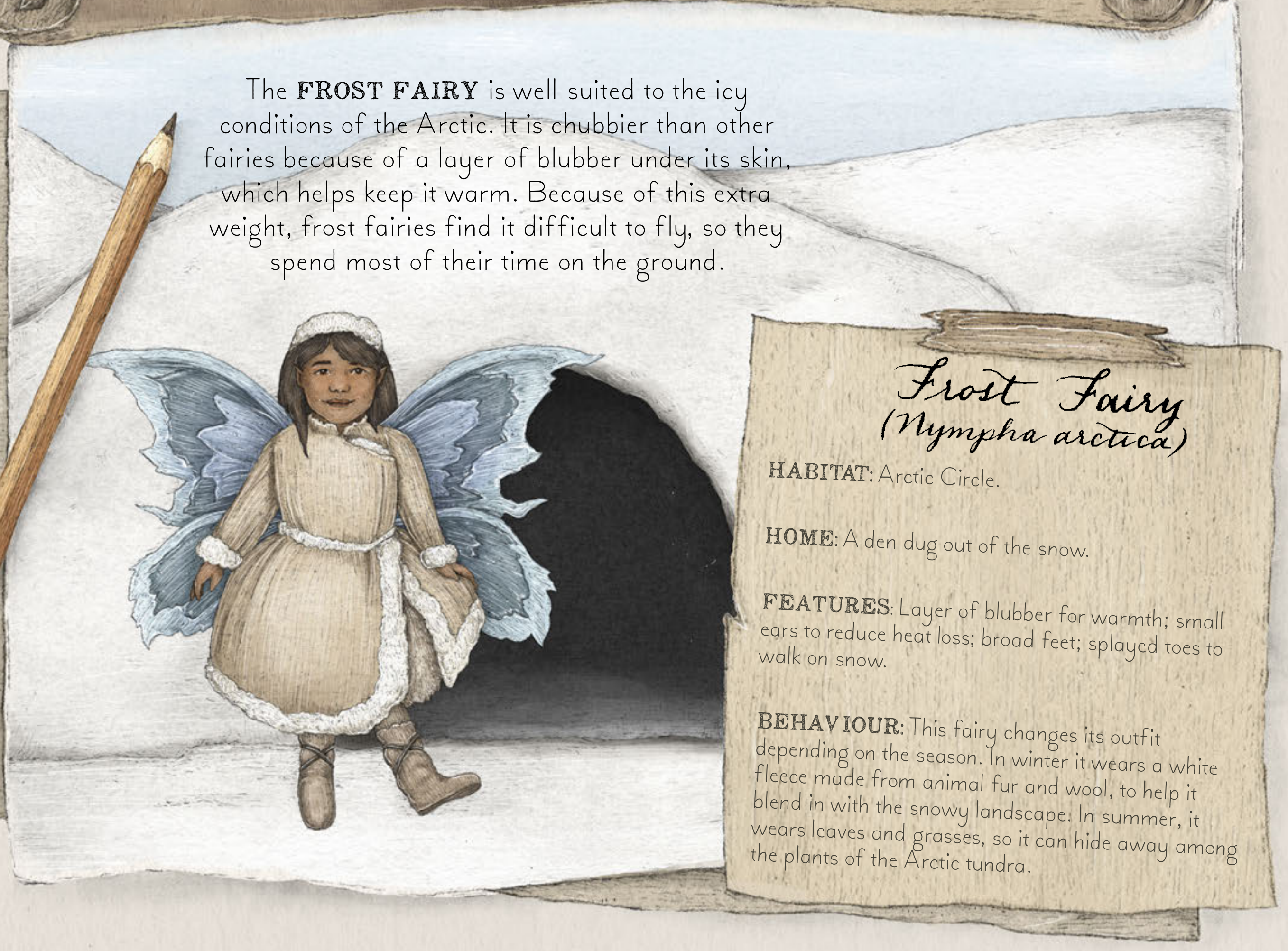
HABITAT: Arctic tundra.

HOME: In summer, the tundra fairy shelters in the abandoned burrows of lemmings.

FEATURES: Mottled brown wings help the fairy blend in with its reindeer companions.

BEHAVIOUR: As the reindeer herd crosses the landscape, the fairies keep a lookout for wolves, bears and golden eagles. They give out different warning cries to identify different types of hunter.

When summer arrives, bringing milder weather and plentiful food, **TUNDRA FAIRIES** appear on the grazing meadows of the Arctic tundra. They travel with enormous herds of reindeer, who migrate north from the forests of Canada and Siberia to raise their young.



The **FROST FAIRY** is well suited to the icy conditions of the Arctic. It is chubbier than other fairies because of a layer of blubber under its skin, which helps keep it warm. Because of this extra weight, frost fairies find it difficult to fly, so they spend most of their time on the ground.

Frost Fairy
(Nympha arctica)

HABITAT: Arctic Circle.

HOME: A den dug out of the snow.

FEATURES: Layer of blubber for warmth; small ears to reduce heat loss; broad feet; splayed toes to walk on snow.

BEHAVIOUR: This fairy changes its outfit depending on the season. In winter it wears a white fleece made from animal fur and wool, to help it blend in with the snowy landscape. In summer, it wears leaves and grasses, so it can hide away among the plants of the Arctic tundra.

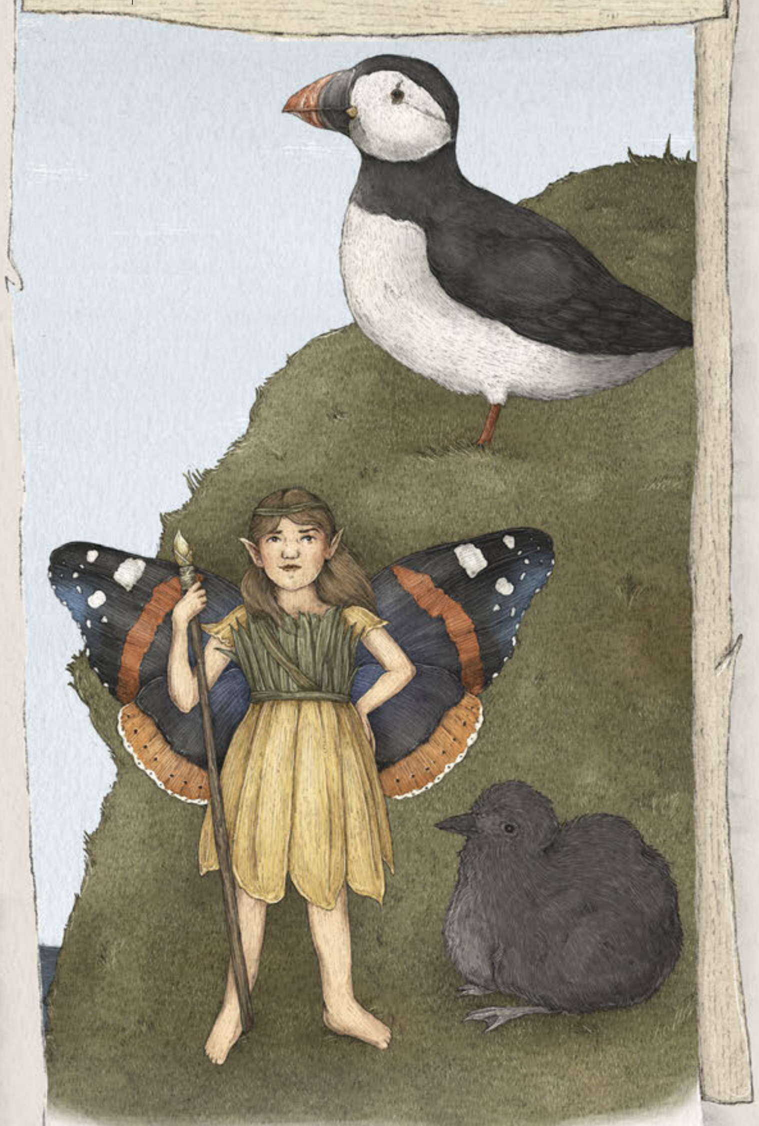
Cliff Sprite
(Nympha alfar)

HABITAT: Coastal regions of Iceland.

HOME: Shares a clifftop burrow with a family of puffins.

FEATURES: Black, white and red wings, similar to the red admiral butterfly.

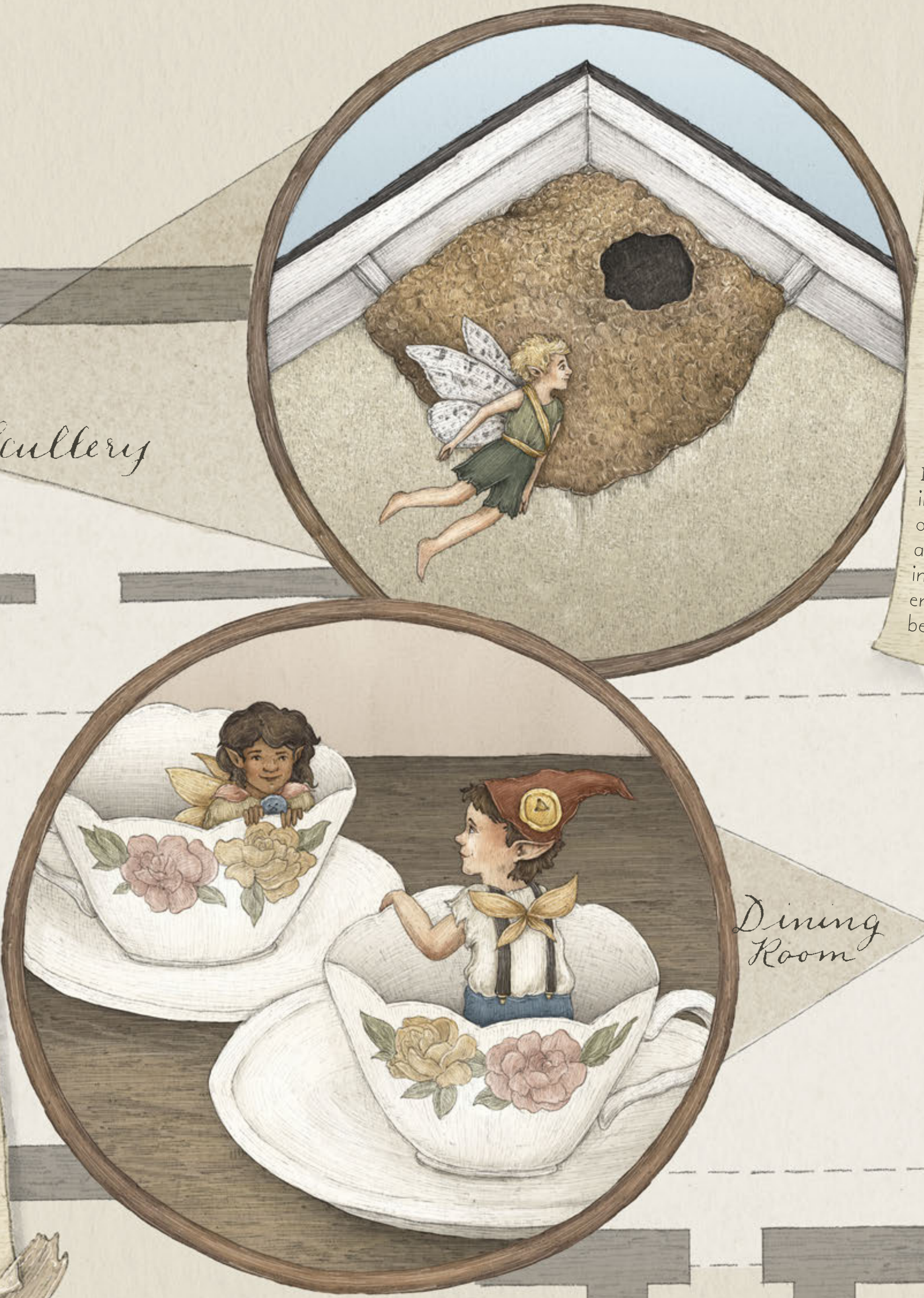
BEHAVIOUR: The cliff sprite has a close relationship with the puffin. When the parents are away fishing, the fairy protects the chicks, called pufflings, from black-backed gulls and other predators.



For generations, the people of Iceland have told stories of a race of magical beings called *álfar* (elves), or *huldufólk* (hidden people). I have found no evidence of these mythical creatures, but I can confirm that a species of fairy does live along Icelandic clifftops.

HOUSE FAIRIES

Many adults might not believe it, but fairies can even be found inside our own homes. These fairies are more often spotted by children than by adults, because youngsters spend more time exploring the nooks and crannies of a house. House fairies usually live in quiet, unused parts of the home: beneath furniture, behind skirting boards and under floorboards.



SWALLOW SPRITES live in the abandoned nests of house martins and swallows on the outer walls of buildings, tucked beneath the eaves.

Swallow Sprite (Nympha casae)

HABITAT: Villages and towns.

HOME: A mud nest under the eaves of a house or barn.

FEATURES: Swallow sprites living in built-up areas tend to have darker wings than countryside sprites. This may be because the air of some cities is polluted by soot and smoke from factories, so darker-coloured wings help fairies blend in.

BEHAVIOUR: Swallow sprites are not very intelligent. They sometimes fly through an open window and get stuck inside, butting up against the glass. If you find a swallow sprite inside, catch it under a cup, slide a sturdy envelope beneath it, and carry it back outside before the creature becomes too distressed.

Brownie (Nympha domestica)

HABITAT: Human homes.

HOME: Brownies often make their nest behind crockery on a dresser, or inside a sewing basket or button tin. They have been known to steal socks to use as sleeping bags.

FEATURES: Clothing made out of scraps of material found around the house; small wings.

BEHAVIOUR: Brownies are fairly good-natured and don't normally interfere too much in human lives. However, mischievous brownies who tie people's hair in knots as they sleep, or leave objects lying around to be tripped over, are known by some as boggarts.

BROWNIES are the most common type of house fairy. These playful creatures have a habit of 'borrowing' human trinkets. If your keys, glasses or hairbrush suddenly go missing, then brownies could be the culprits.

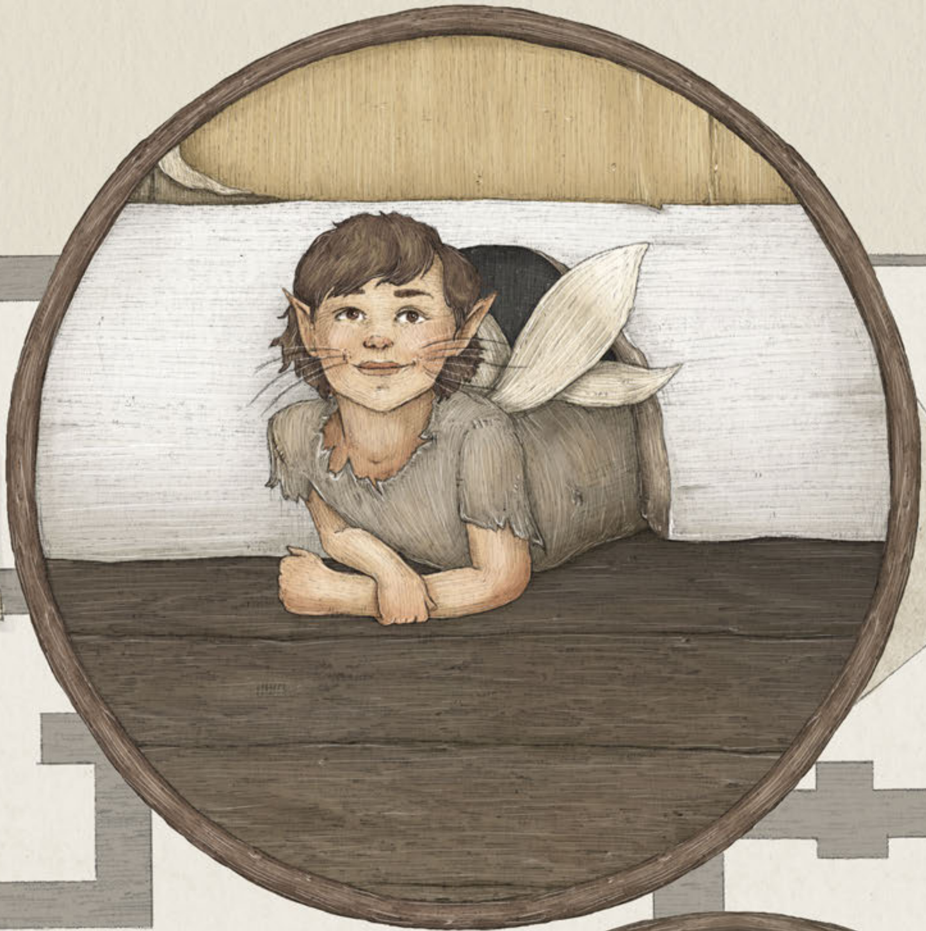
Hobgoblin (*Nympha culinae*)

HABITAT: Human homes.

HOME: Usually behind a kitchen skirting board, or under a cupboard.

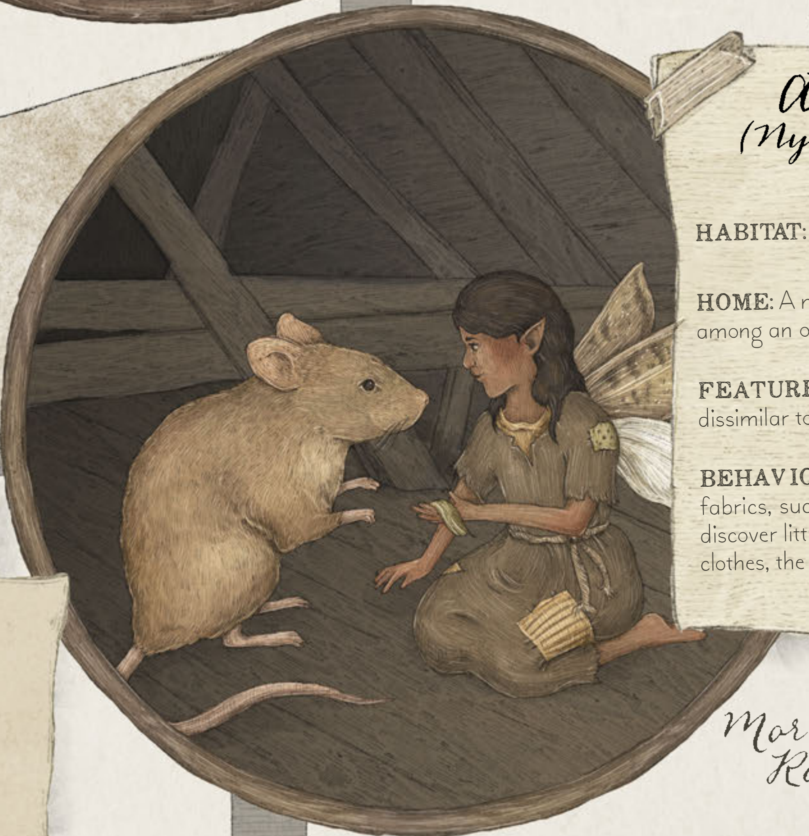
FEATURES: Small wings; whiskers like a mouse.

BEHAVIOUR: There are lots of folk tales about hobgoblins who help out with household chores. I haven't seen any evidence of this, but the misunderstanding might arise from the fact that hobs gather up crumbs to eat – giving the impression that they are cleaning the floor!



If you hear scurrying sounds in the kitchen at night they could be the pattering footsteps of mice. However, they're just as likely to be caused by kitchen fairies called **HOBGOBLINS**, or hobs for short.

Attics make perfect homes for fairies: they are warm, quiet and usually undisturbed. Attic fairies often live happily alongside mice and have a knack for springing open mouse traps without getting caught, stealing the bait to share with their rodent friends.



Attic Fairy (*Nympha cenaculi*)

HABITAT: Lofts and attics.

HOME: A nest next to a warm pipe or among an old pile of clothes.

FEATURES: Brown, mottled wings, not dissimilar to those of clothes moths.

BEHAVIOUR: Attic fairies feed on natural fabrics, such as wool and silk. If you discover little holes in your stored-away clothes, the fairies may have gotten to them!

A NOTE ON THE TOOTH FAIRY

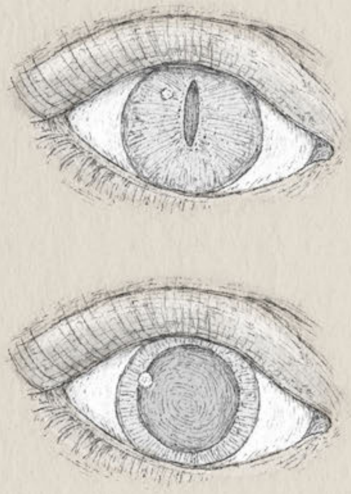
During my studies I have been unable to track down this elusive creature. I am unsure of the tooth fairy's natural habitat: presumably different subspecies live in various habitats all over the world. I would imagine that each type of tooth fairy has some knowledge of the human language and currency of its particular region. As yet, I do not know what the collected teeth are used for. Legend has it that tooth fairies use children's teeth as bricks to build their homes, but more research is needed to confirm this.

LIFE IN FAIRYLAND

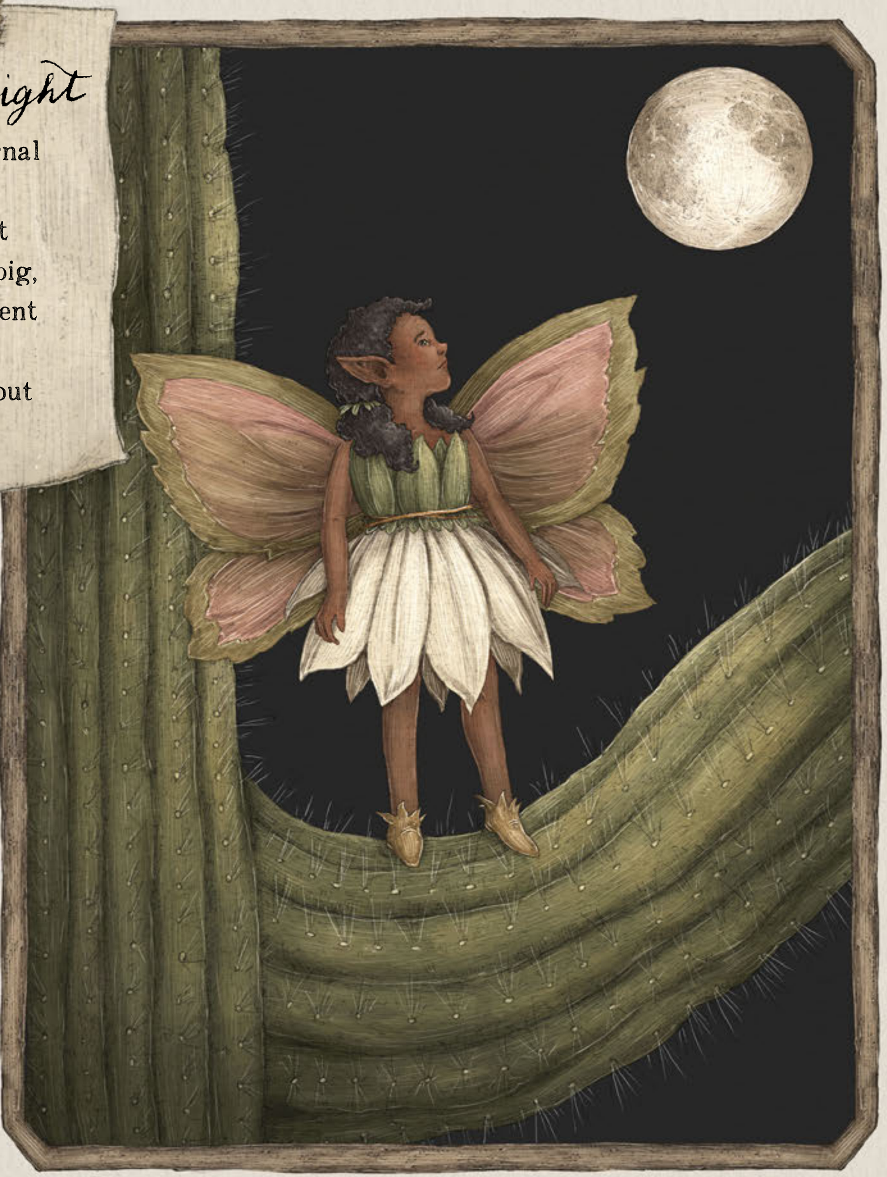
By now, you will understand that there is no such place as 'Fairyland' as a separate, magical world that humans can't reach. Fairies share our world, living among us as part of the natural web of life. Depending on their surroundings, different types of fairy behave in different ways. For example, some species are most active during the day, while others come out at night; some fairies hibernate in winter, while others set off on long migrations as the seasons change.

Wanderers of the Night

Many types of fairy are nocturnal (they only come out at night). They have special features that help them survive in the dark: big, powerful eyes give them excellent night vision, while their large, sensitive ears help them listen out for danger.

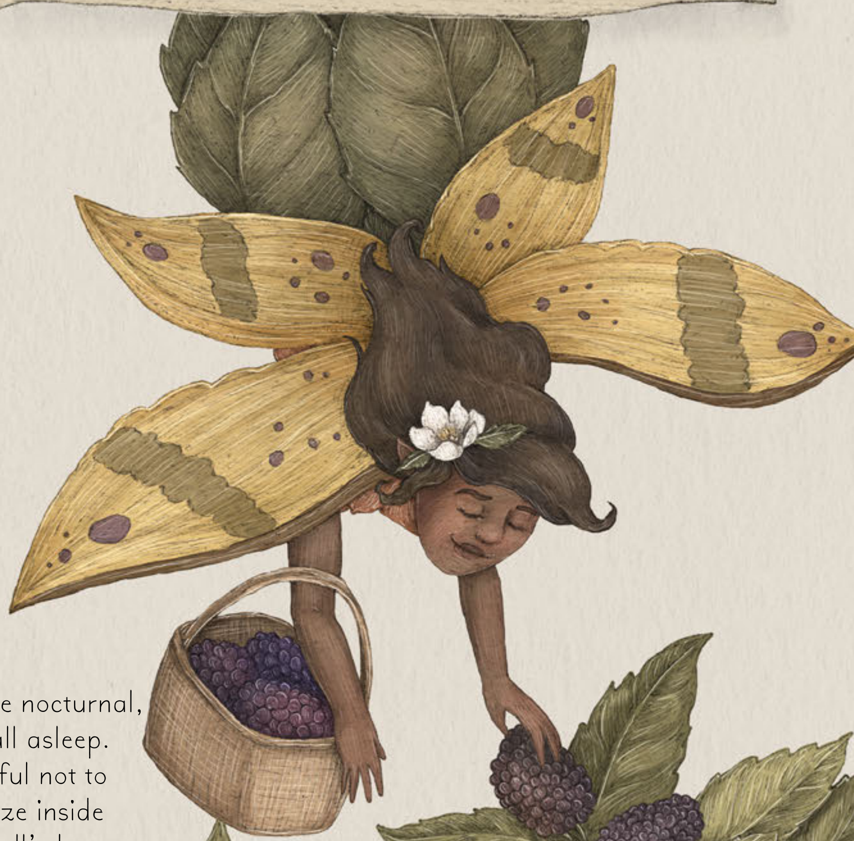


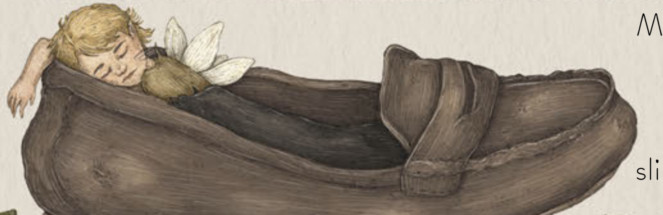
Nocturnal fairies have eyes similar to a cat's. Their vertical pupils open wide to let in as much light as possible. They also have a special mirror-like layer at the back of the eye that reflects the light, helping them see in the dark.



Fairy Foods

The fairies I have come across so far are herbivores, meaning that they eat plants, not other animals. Favourite fairy foods include nuts and seeds, berries and other fruits, as well as pollen and nectar from flowers. Many fairies seem to have a sweet tooth, preferring the most syrupy, high-calorie snacks. This is no doubt because their quick-beating wings use up a lot of energy, so they are often hungry.

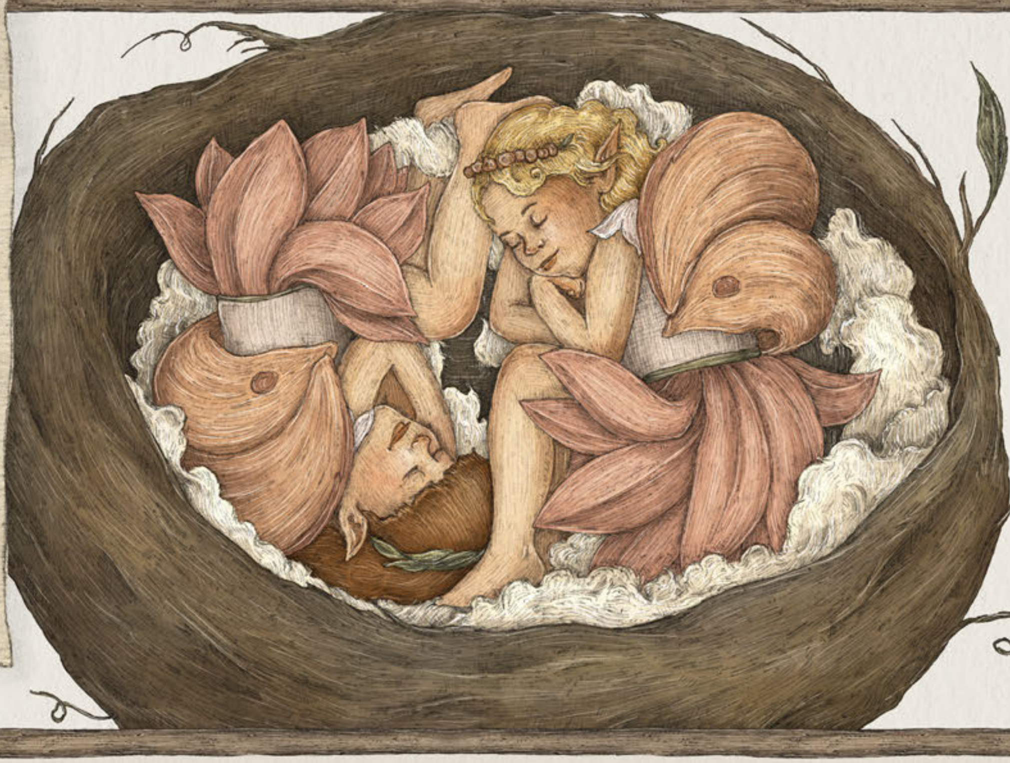




Many household fairies are nocturnal, emerging when we are all asleep. During the day, be careful not to disturb them as they doze inside slippers, sock drawers or doll's houses.

Sleeping Beauties

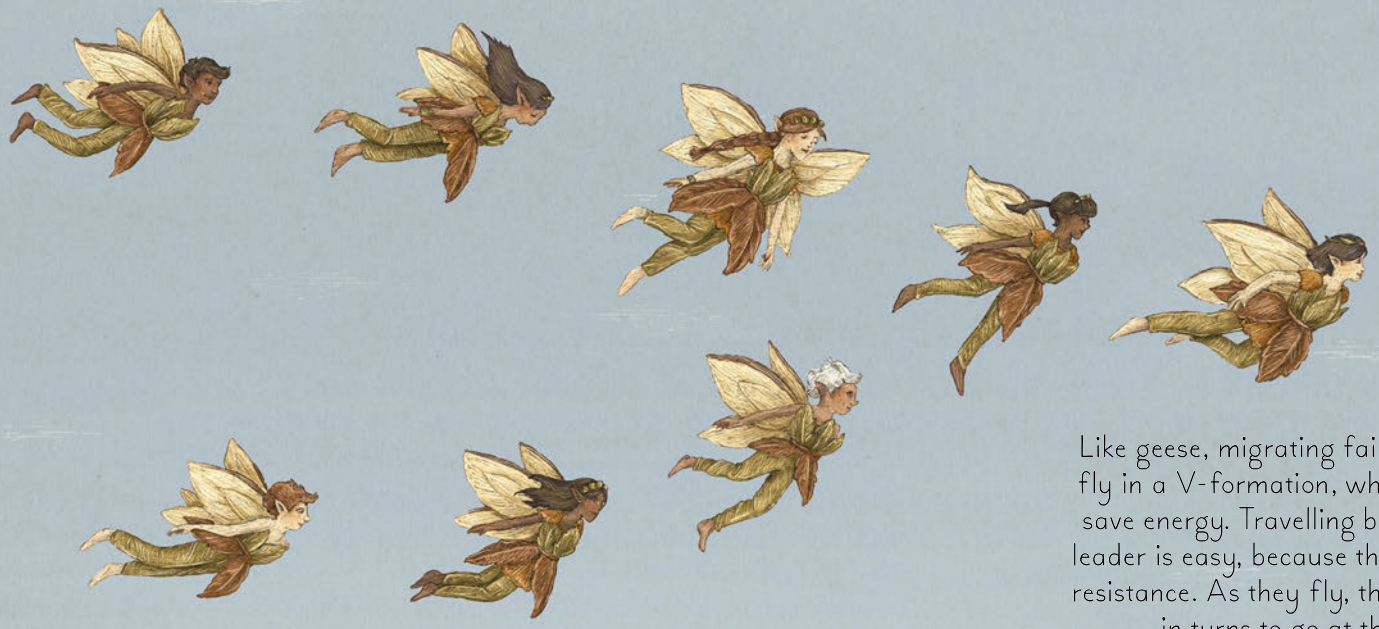
Lots of fairies – for example, the apple tree fairy and the sweetbriar fairy – have a close relationship with a particular type of plant. In winter, many plants and trees become dormant, shedding their leaves to stop them from freezing. While the plants rest, their fairy guardians often rest as well, entering a winter sleep called hibernation. This solves the problem of having to find food when it is scarce. In autumn, the fairies prepare by collecting plentiful supplies, stocking up on snacks so they don't have to leave their cosy nests during the long, cold months ahead.



Some fairies hibernate alone, while others huddle together. The wings of certain species have special thermal properties to keep them extra warm.

On the Move

Just like many species of butterfly and bird, some fairies embark on a long journey as winter approaches, seeking out warmer weather. At the end of autumn, for example, the rowan fairy travels from northern Scandinavia to the milder British Isles. It is unclear exactly how fairies manage to find their way across such large distances. They may be guided by the position of the sun and stars, as well as by rivers, coastlines and other landmarks.



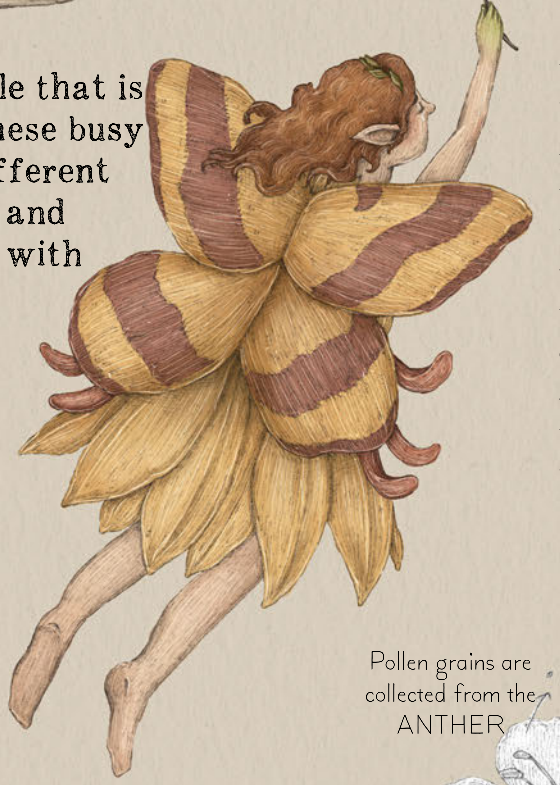
Like geese, migrating fairies sometimes fly in a V-formation, which helps them save energy. Travelling behind the pack leader is easy, because there is less wind resistance. As they fly, the fairies take it in turns to go at the front.

FAIRIES AND PLANTS

Fairies play a vital role in the natural world – a role that is not recognised or understood by most humans. These busy little creatures take care of the plants in their different habitats: they help to pollinate them, spread their seeds and keep them healthy. In return, the plants provide fairies with both a safe place to shelter and a supply of food.

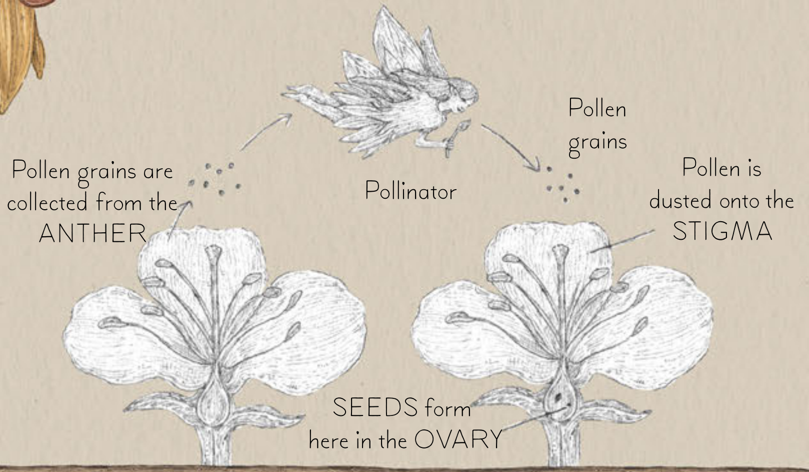
A Watchful Eye

To look after their plants, fairies carry out many different tasks. In dry areas, they check plants each morning to make sure they have enough moisture, often sprinkling them with dewdrops if they look thirsty. These tiny gardeners carefully inspect a plant's roots, leaves and stems for signs of disease, as well as picking off pests and making sure branches have plenty of room to spread out.



Pretty Pollinators

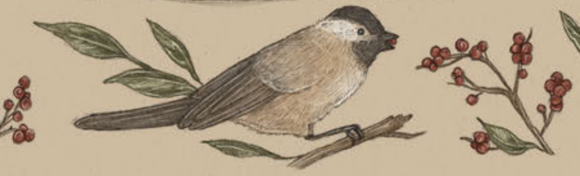
Why do plants have flowers? Flowers help plants produce new plants. A flower contains a special powdery substance called pollen. In most plants, if grains of pollen find their way from one flower to another, then seeds will form, which grow into new plants. Pollen is usually carried between different flowers by the wind, by insects… and by fairies! Fairies often dart around with a little brush, dabbing pollen dust from flower to flower.


Pollen grains are collected from the ANTHER
Pollinator
Pollen grains
Pollen is dusted onto the STIGMA
SEEDS form here in the OVARY

Scattering Seeds

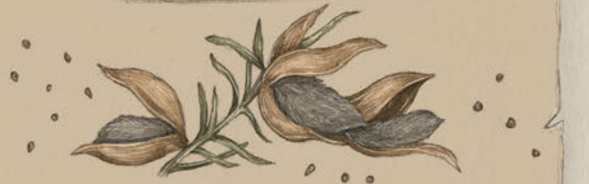
For a new plant to grow, a plant's seeds must be spread so they can sprout and take root. So, how do plants scatter their seeds? Some are helped by the wind or by animals, while others depend on fairies.

Animal Helpers



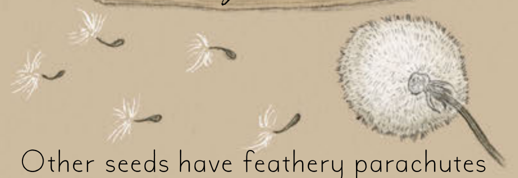
Birds and other animals feed on fruit, scattering the seeds in their droppings. Some seeds attach to an animal's fur to hitch a lift.

Stand Clear!



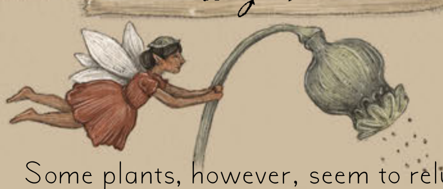
In some plants, the fruit explodes once it is ripe, scattering seeds far and wide.

Blowing in the Wind



Other seeds have feathery parachutes that catch the breeze, so they can be carried by the wind to a new home.

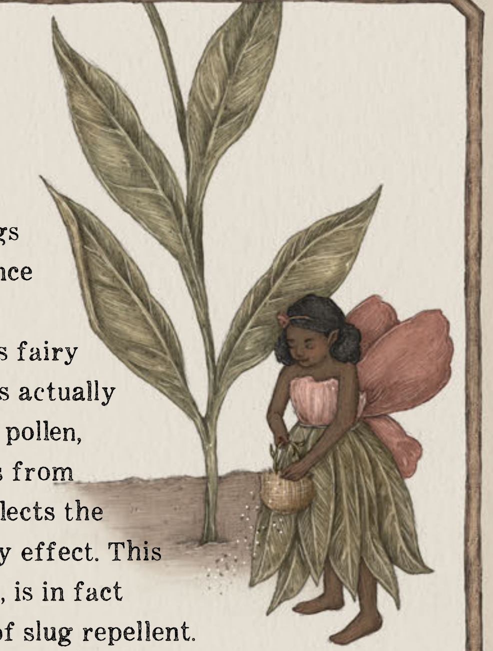
Fairy Friends



Some plants, however, seem to rely on fairies to scatter their seeds, making sure new plants will grow.

Fairy Dust

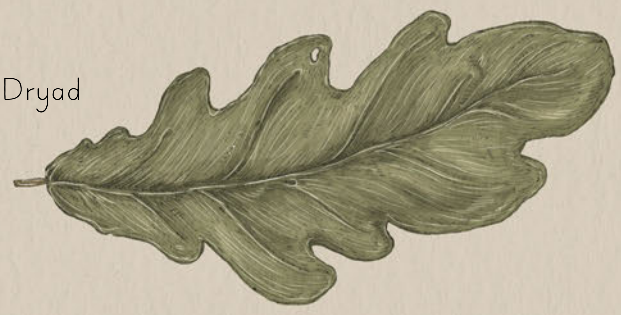
In the past, some people have noticed the presence of 'fairy dust' in woodlands and clearings on moonlit nights. This substance has long been prized for its magical properties. But what is fairy dust? I believe that fairy dust is actually a mixture of different types of pollen, combined with iridescent scales from a fairy's wings. At night, it reflects the moonlight to produce a glittery effect. This powder, far from being 'magic', is in fact sprinkled by fairies as a form of slug repellent.



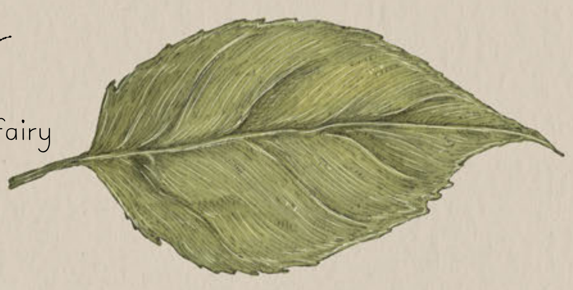
A LEAF IDENTIFICATION CHART

Anyone who wishes to learn more about the ways of fairies should be able to recognise different types of trees. If you know the most common plants in your local area, then you will know which fairies you might have a chance of spotting.

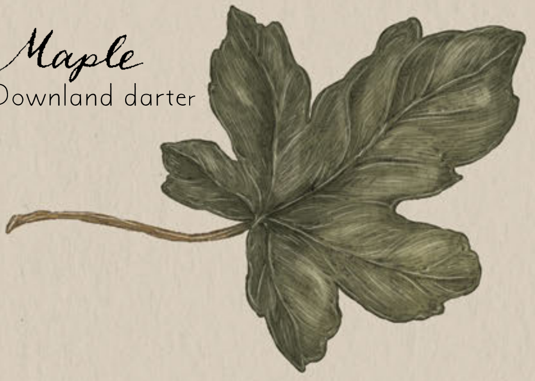
Oak
Look for: Dryad



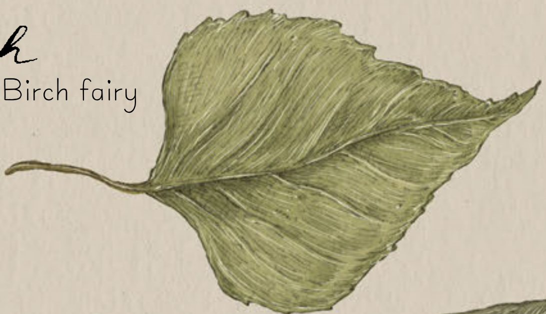
Apple
Look for:
Apple tree fairy



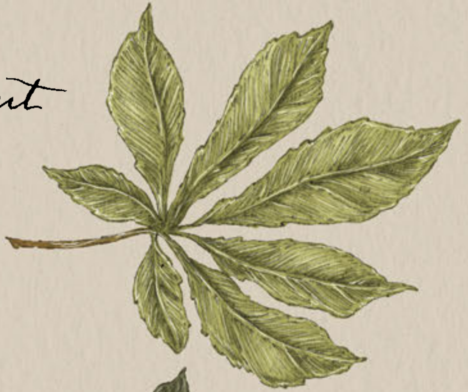
Field Maple
Look for: Downland darter



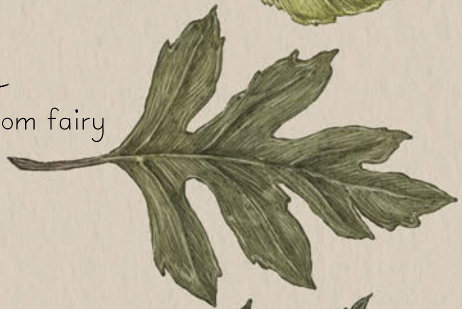
Birch
Look for: Birch fairy



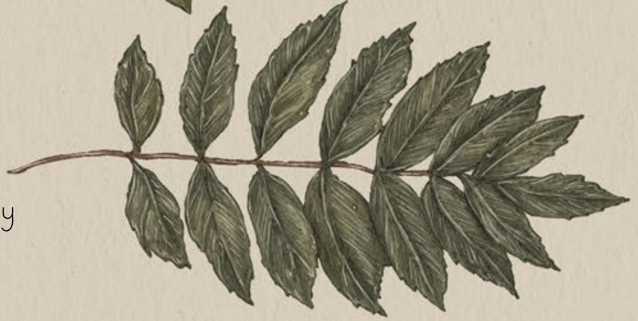
Horse Chestnut
Look for: Conker sprite



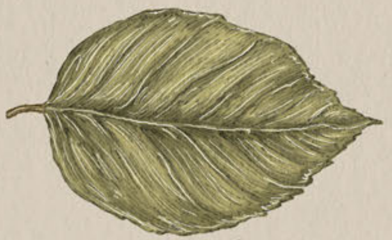
Hawthorn
Look for: Mayblossom fairy



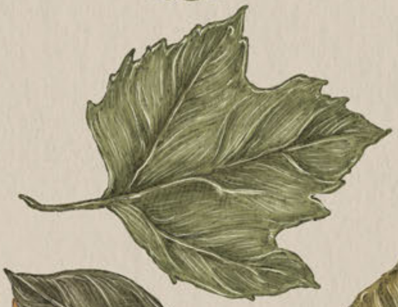
Rowan
Look for: Rowan fairy



Beech
Look for: Woodpecker fairy

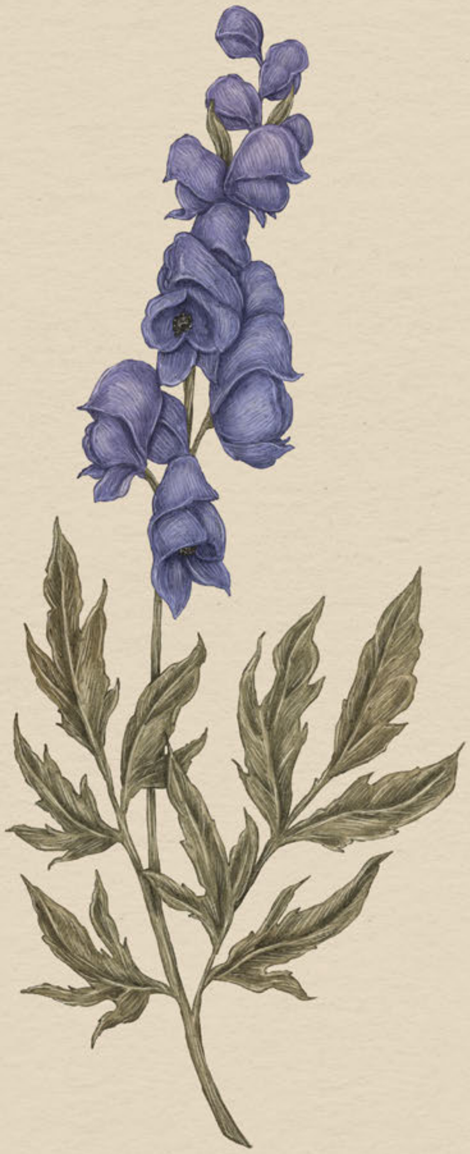


Sycamore
Look for: Candlemas belle



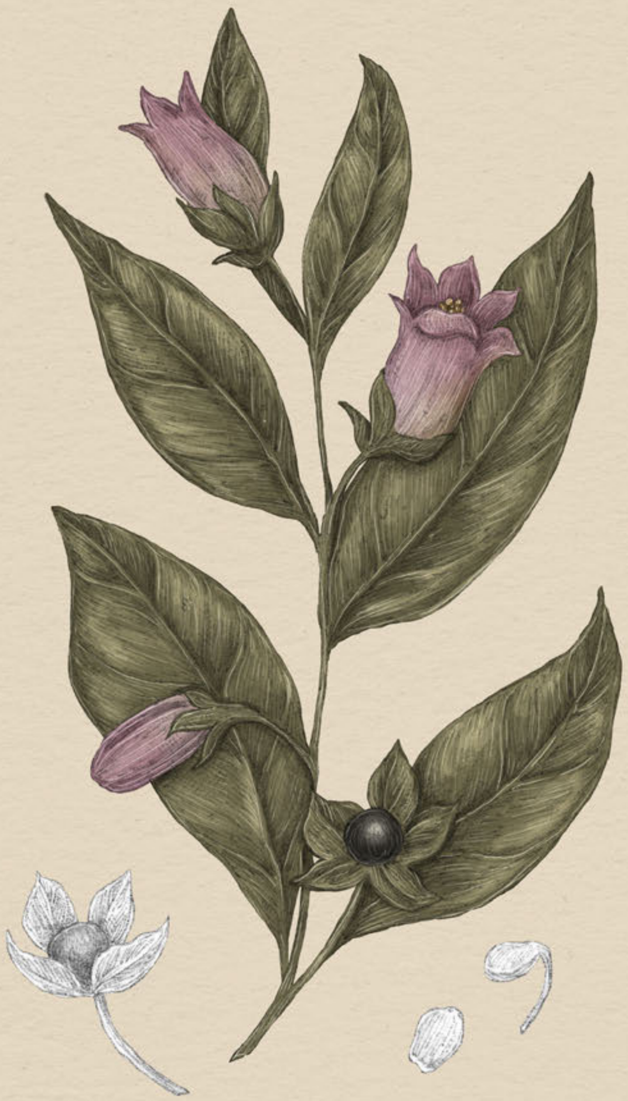
A POISON GARDEN

A note of warning to all fairy-spotters: when you are out in local woodland searching for our winged friends, be aware that many plants beloved by fairies are in fact poisonous to humans. A fairy forest is not always a place for the faint of heart, but may be a garden of deadly dangers. Never, ever eat wild berries, mushrooms or other plants unless a knowledgeable adult has checked them.



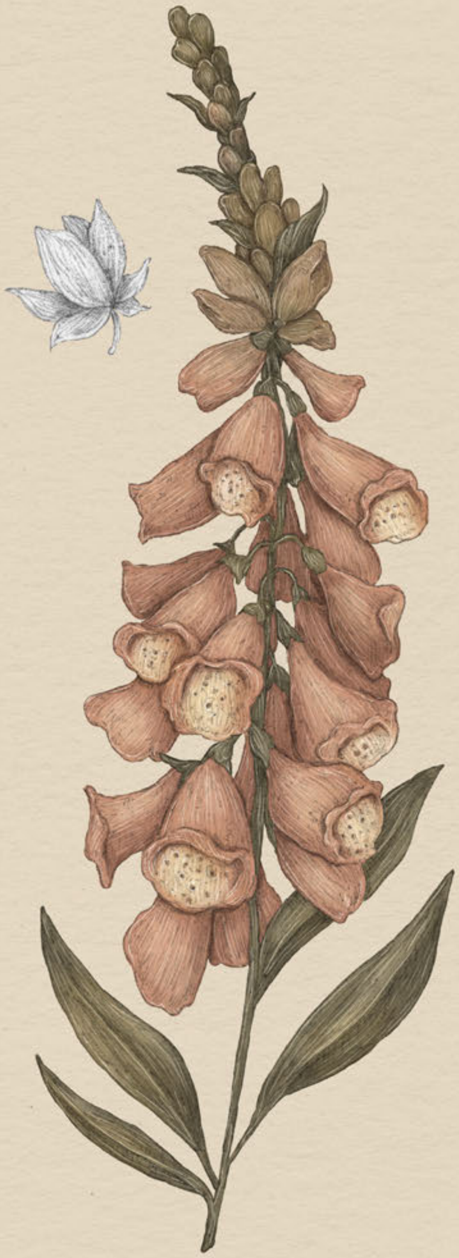
Aconite

Also known as 'monkshood', 'wolf's bane' and 'devil's helmet', this deadly plant grows in damp woodlands and meadows. Merely touching the leaves, flowers or roots can poison a human, but fairies seem immune – they can sometimes be seen flitting among the beautiful blue blooms.



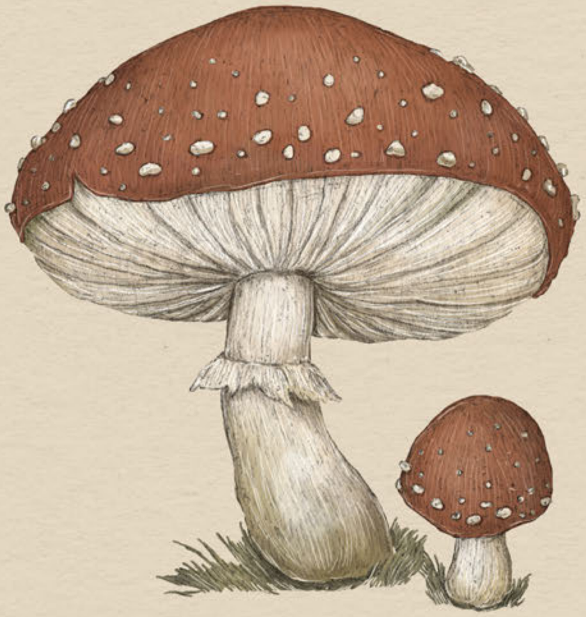
Belladonna

Belladonna – also known as 'deadly nightshade' and 'the devil's cherries' – appears harmless to fairies, although just two berries can kill a human child. Other effects include blurred vision, headaches, vomiting, drowsiness and hallucinations.



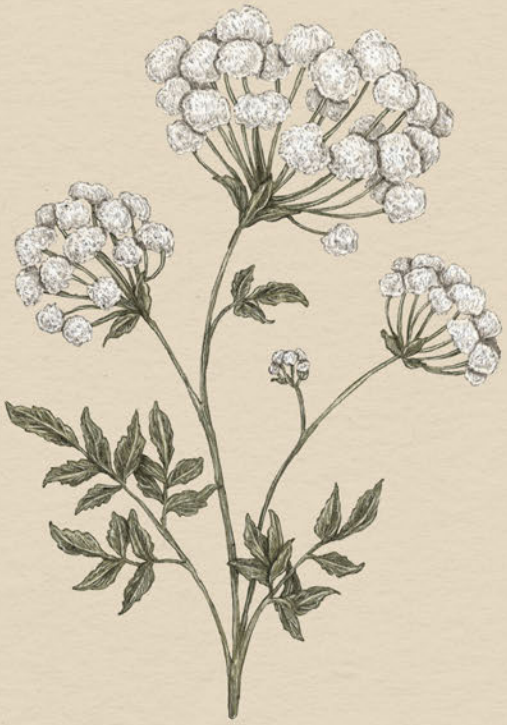
Foxglove

Foxglove flowers are often called 'witches' thimbles', 'dead men's bells' and 'fairy caps'. Indeed, occasionally the pink and purple blooms are worn as hats by fairies. However, the foxglove contains poisons that can affect the heart and kidneys in humans, and cause vomiting.



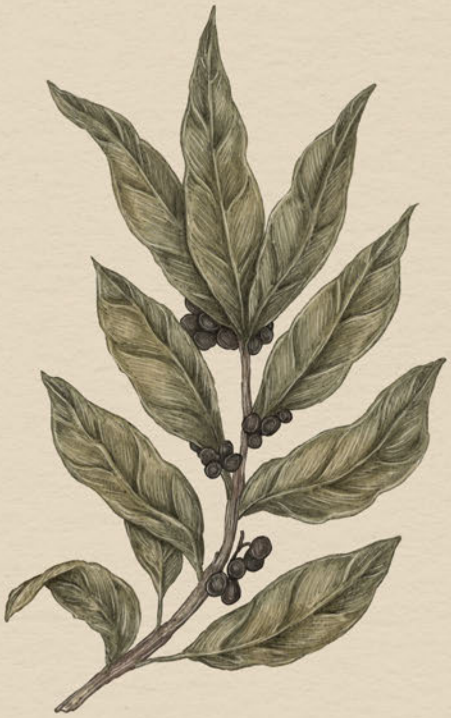
Fly Agaric

Fairies often sit on or shelter beneath these red-and-white toadstools. Like other types of fungus, these poisonous toadstools can spring up overnight in groups, forming a ring. In the past, people believed that any human who dared set foot inside a 'fairy ring' might be spirited away to fairyland.



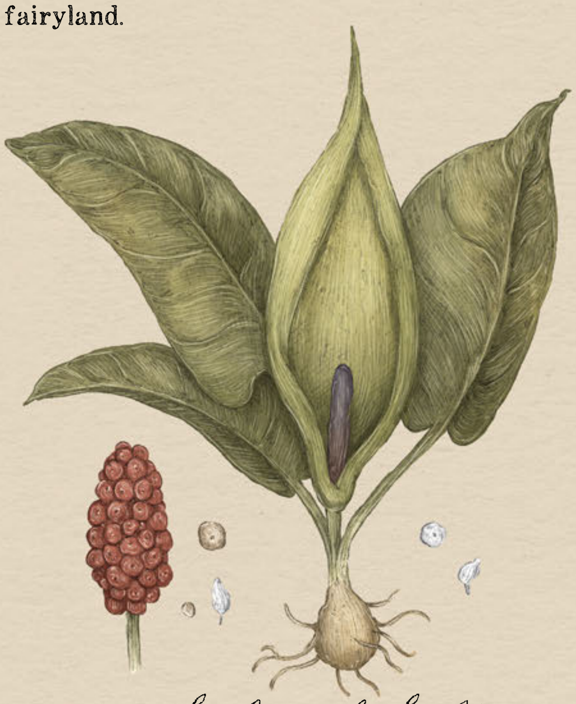
Hemlock

This pretty plant is favoured by fairies but is extremely toxic to humans. It grows in ditches and on riverbanks, and along the edges of woodland. If eaten by a human, hemlock can cause sickness and even death.



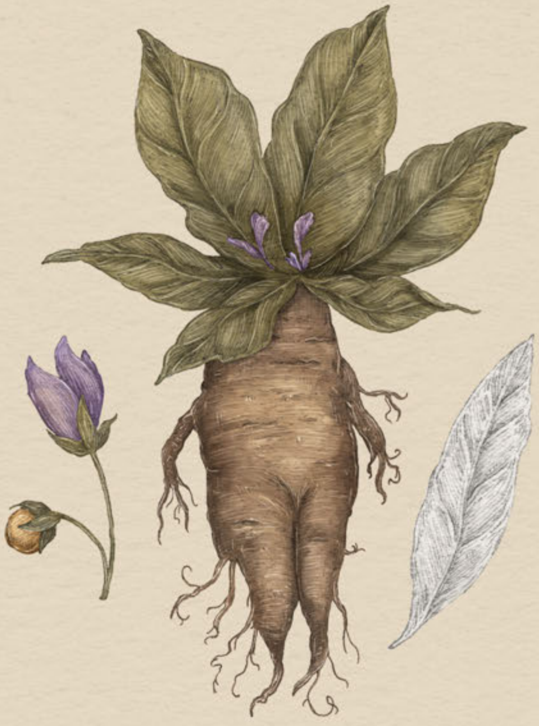
Laurel

Humans should steer well clear of the laurel plant. All parts of the laurel, from the berries and leaves to the stems and roots, are poisonous, containing a deadly substance called cyanide. Fairies, however, seem unaffected by this poison and often feed on the berries.



Lords and Ladies

This common woodland plant has many names, including 'devils and angels', 'cuckoo pint' and 'Jack-in-the-pulpit'. Its bright red and orange berries, while a favourite fairy snack, will cause the mouth and throat to swell if consumed by humans, making it difficult to breathe.



Mandrake

Shrouded in legend, the mandrake has been used historically in medicines to relieve pain. However, too large a dose can prove fatal. The root sometimes looks almost human, and folk tales say that a mandrake emits an ear-splitting shriek if uprooted. In reality, any shrieks heard may actually come from the resident fairy, protesting at the destruction of its home.

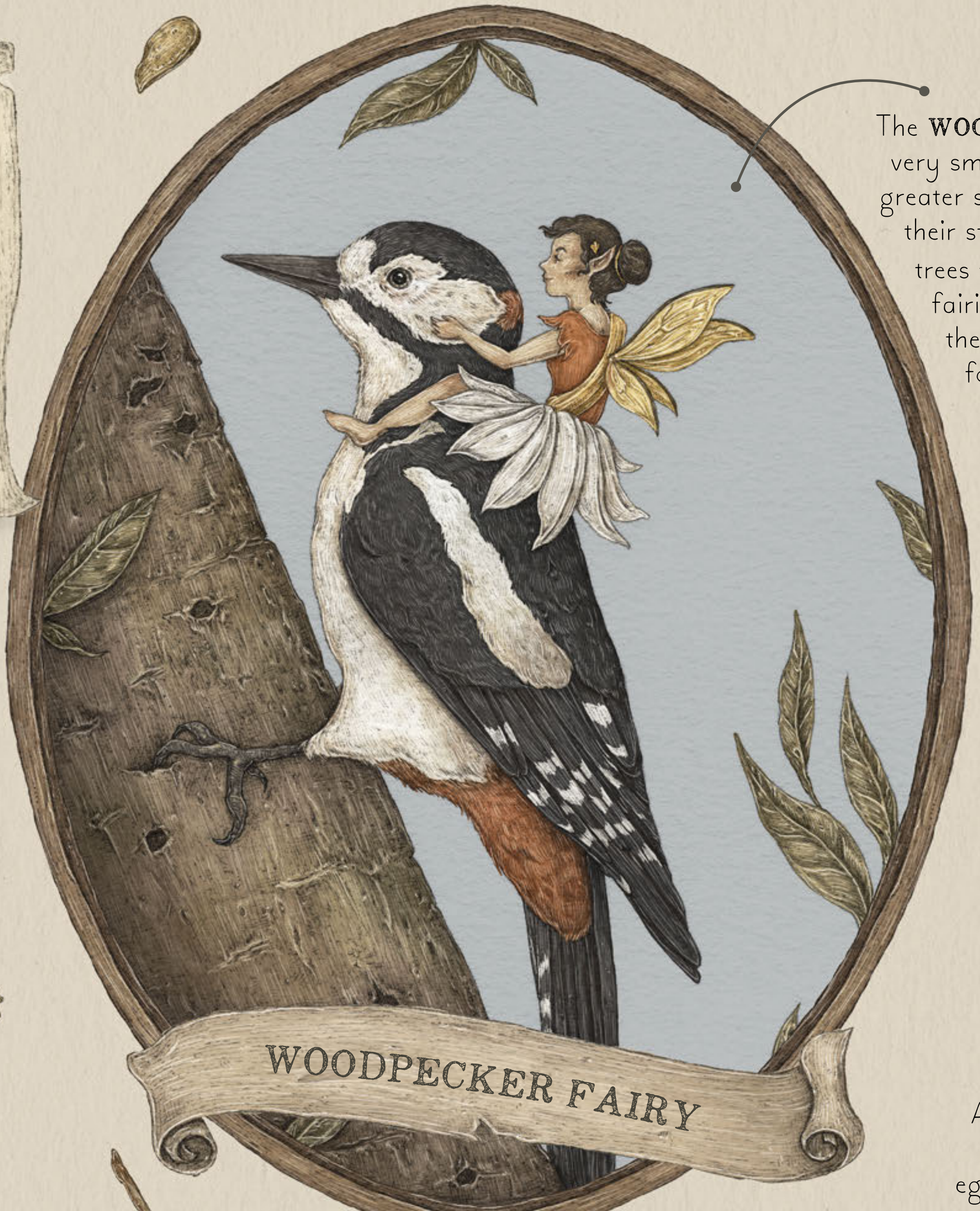
I warn you again never to be tempted by any plants you find in the wild. The results can be extremely dangerous.

FAIRIES AND ANIMALS

Unlike fairies in stories, real fairies can't turn themselves into different animals, but they do have a close connection with many species. As members of the animal kingdom, fairies naturally come into contact with other creatures. They live happily alongside many types of wildlife, often helping each other. This type of relationship, where both species benefit, is called 'mutualism'.

Feathered Friends

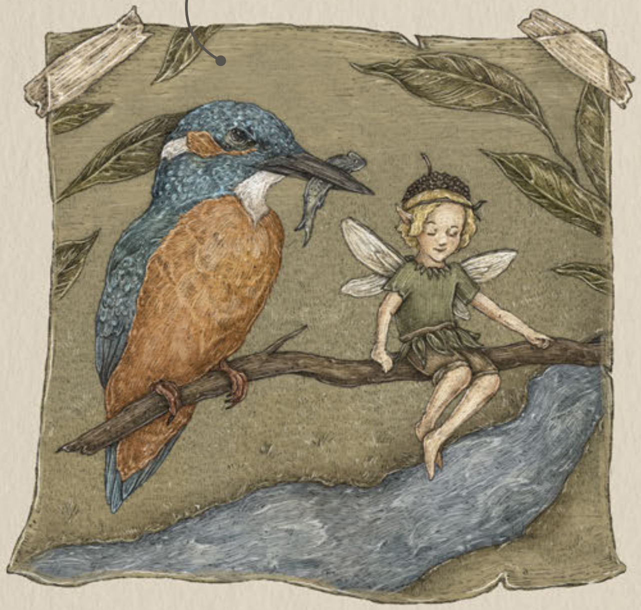
Many types of fairy have a strong relationship with birds. Fairies will often hitch a lift on the back of a bird in exchange for a small service, such as a spot of grooming. Birds use particular alarm calls to warn fairies when dangerous creatures – including humans – are near.

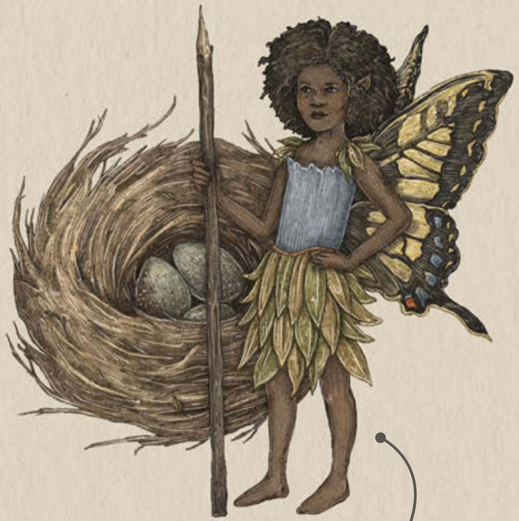


WOODPECKER FAIRY

The **WOODPECKER FAIRY**, whose wings are very small, will often ride on the back of the greater spotted woodpecker. Woodpeckers use their strong beaks to chisel out nest holes in trees – not only for themselves, but also for fairies! In return, a fairy will pick ticks off the woodpecker, and will keep an eye out for sparrowhawks and goshawks, who prey on both species.

The kingfisher only tolerates one species of fairy in its territory: the **RIVER SPRITE**. The river sprite helps the kingfisher by guarding its riverbank nest and protecting the chicks while the kingfisher is hunting. In return, the kingfisher alerts the fairy if predators approach.

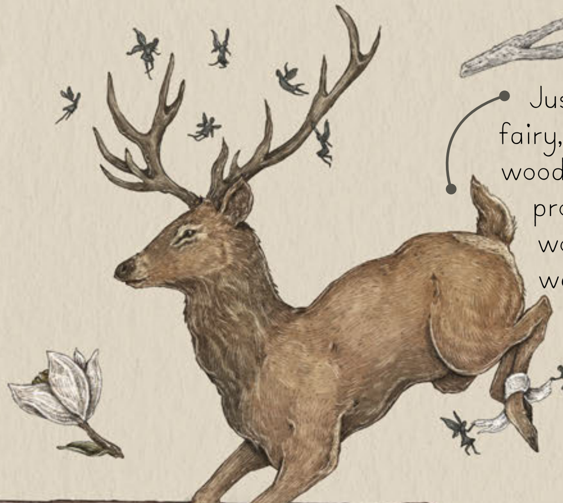




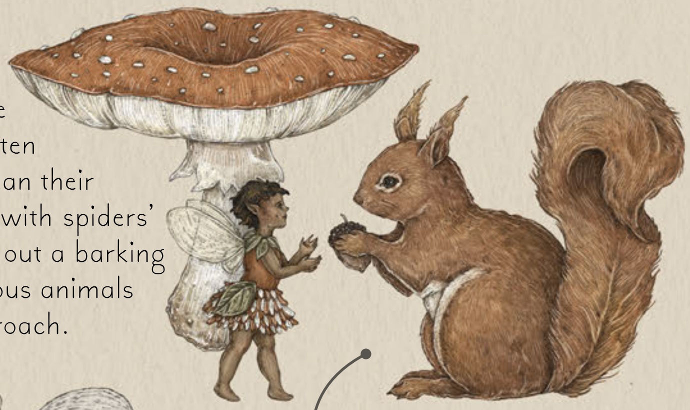
A meadow pipit's nest is often chosen by a cuckoo as the perfect place to lay an egg. Once the cuckoo hatches, it pushes the other youngsters out of the nest. The pipit is fooled into caring for the oversized cuckoo chick, believing it to be its own. To prevent this, a **SWALLOWTAIL FAIRY** often stands guard in a meadow pipit's nest, armed with a sharp stick to keep cuckoos away.

Woodland Creatures

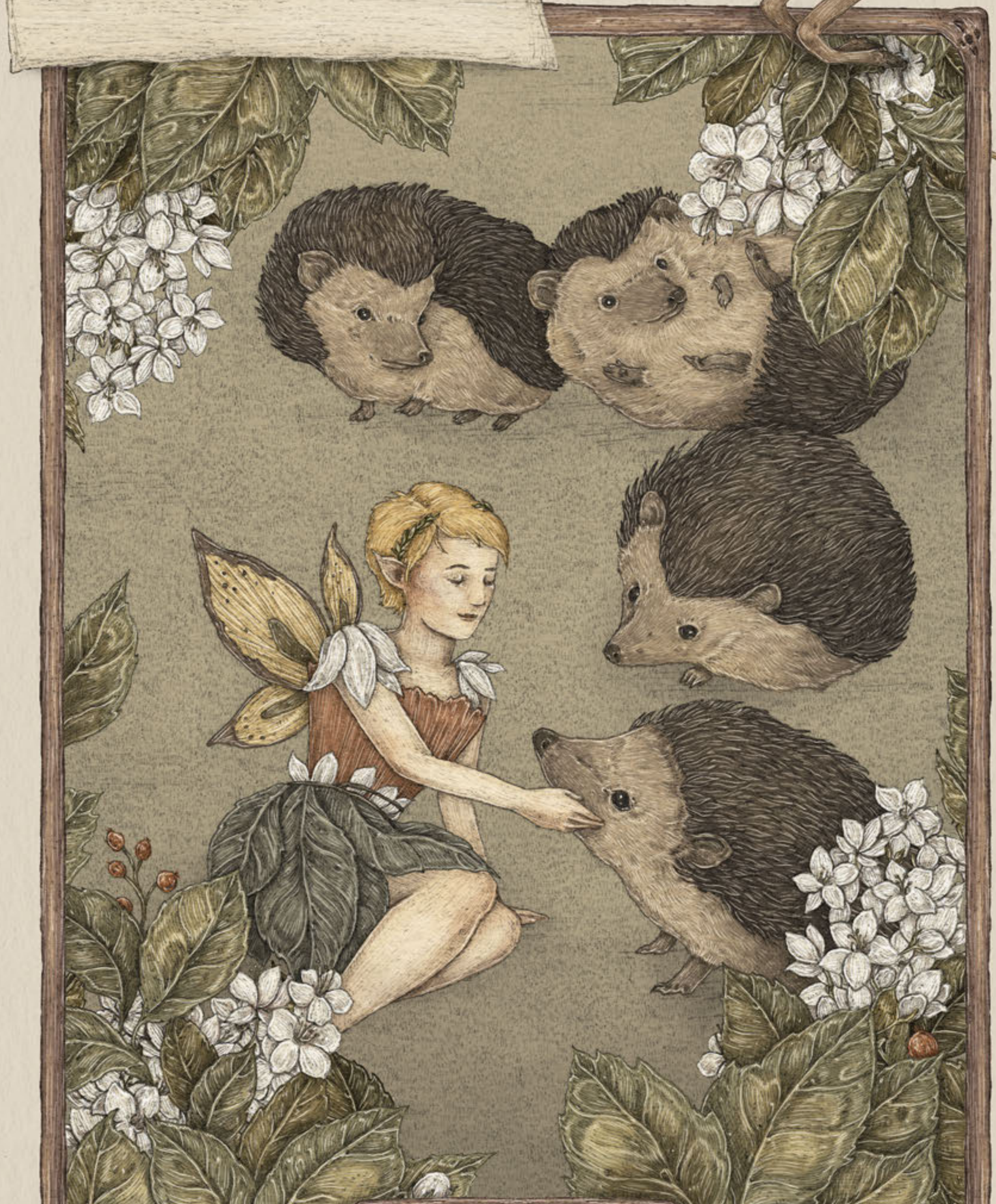
Mayblossom fairies have an interesting relationship with the European hedgehog. These fairies will often look after baby hedgehogs, called hoglets, while the mother is away foraging. In return, hedgehogs have been known to donate quills to fairies to use as spears to help defend themselves from hunters.



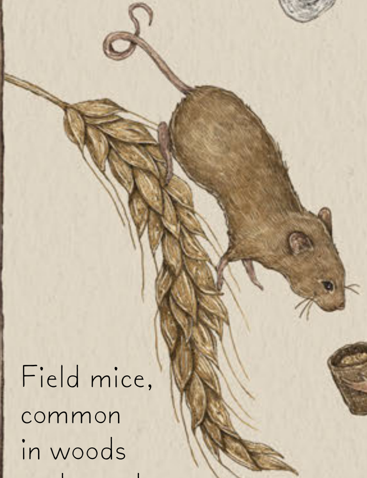
Just like many species of fairy, the red deer is a secretive woodland dweller. Deer are often protected by fairies, who clean their wounds and bandage them with spiders' webs. In return, the deer let out a barking alarm call when dangerous animals approach.

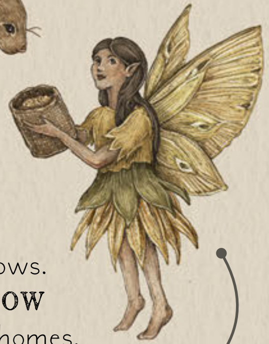


Some British fairies, such as the **TOADSTOOL FAIRY**, have a special friendship with red squirrels. They tend to avoid grey squirrels, who were brought to Britain from the United States in the 1870s. The greys often carry the squirrel pox virus, which is fatal to red squirrels. Many woodland fairies help red squirrels by bringing them food and nursing them when sick.



MAYBLOSSOM FAIRY WITH HOGLETS

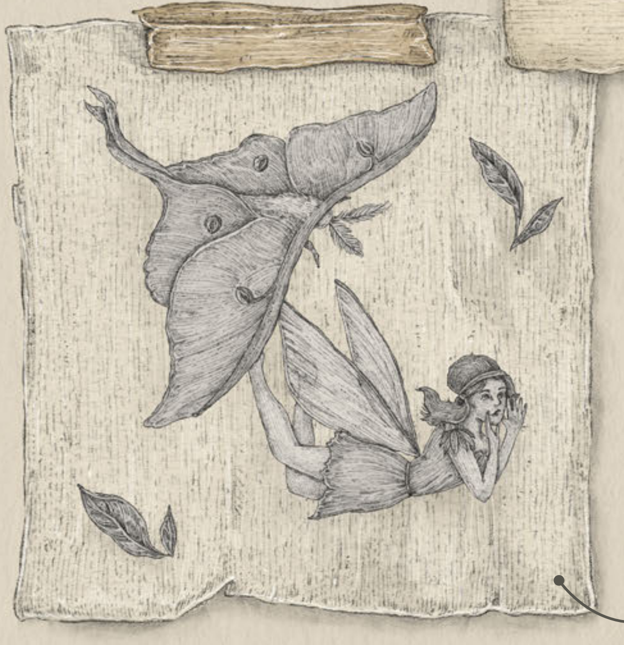




Field mice, common in woods and meadows, live in underground burrows. They often allow **MEADOW FAIRIES** to share their homes, in exchange for seeds and berries.

Insect Allies

Fairies adore honey, so they sometimes help bees collect pollen and nectar. They are natural allies of butterflies, keeping watch for attacking snakes and wasps. Fairies are also friendly to moths.



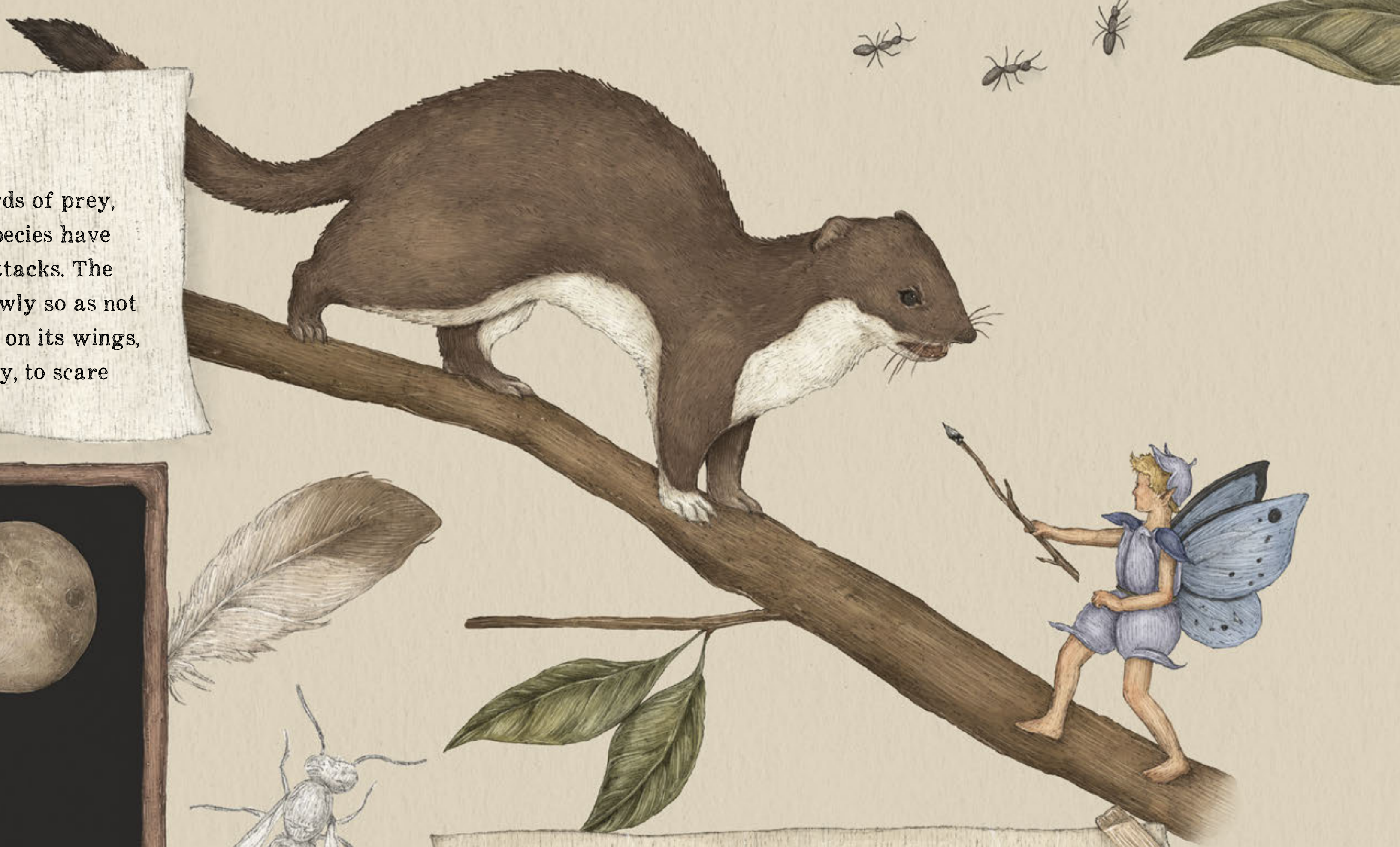
Moths are the favourite prey of bats, who track them in the dark by sending out high-pitched squeaks and listening for the echoes to bounce off a moth's body. Some fairies emit their own squeaking sounds at night to confuse hunting bats and protect the moths. This tactic is called 'echolocation jamming'.

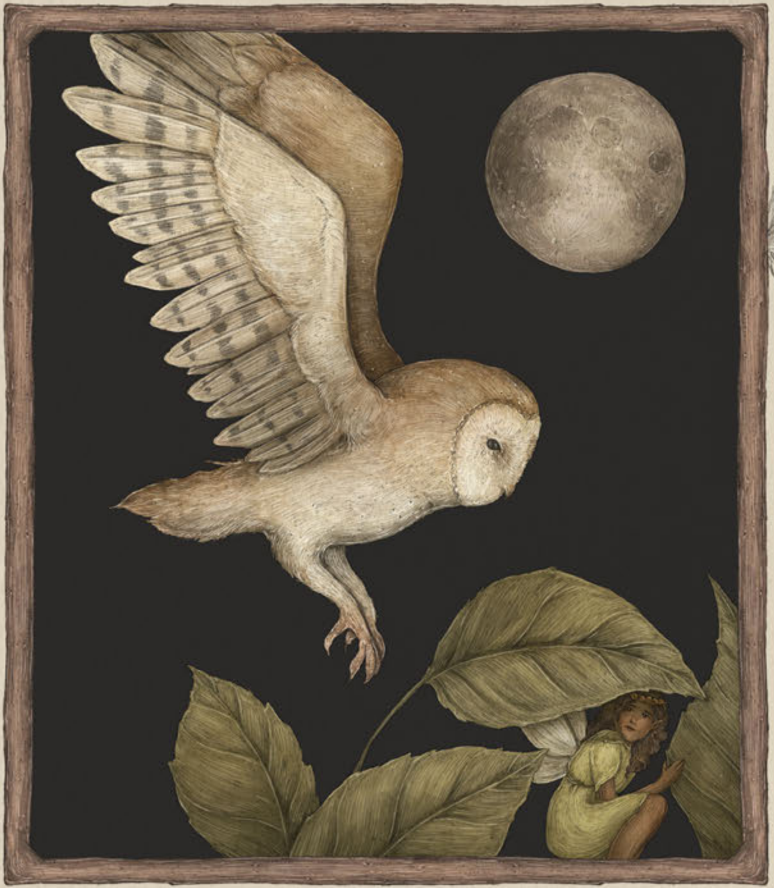
FAIRY FOES

Like all other creatures, fairies are part of the food web in each of their various habitats. Being herbivores, they do not eat other animals but feed on plants instead. However, they are often hunted by predatory creatures, including snakes, stoats, weasels, birds of prey, spiders and wasps. Sometimes, they are even on the menu of carnivorous plants! To stay safe, fairies have a range of tricks to put off attackers, including camouflage, poison… and the ability to fight back!

Birds of Prey

Fairies all around the world are hunted by birds of prey, including owls, eagles and hawks. Different species have developed clever ways of avoiding airborne attacks. The pepper pot fairy, for example, moves very slowly so as not to be spotted. The peacock fairy has eyespots on its wings, which look like the eyes of a large bird of prey, to scare others away.





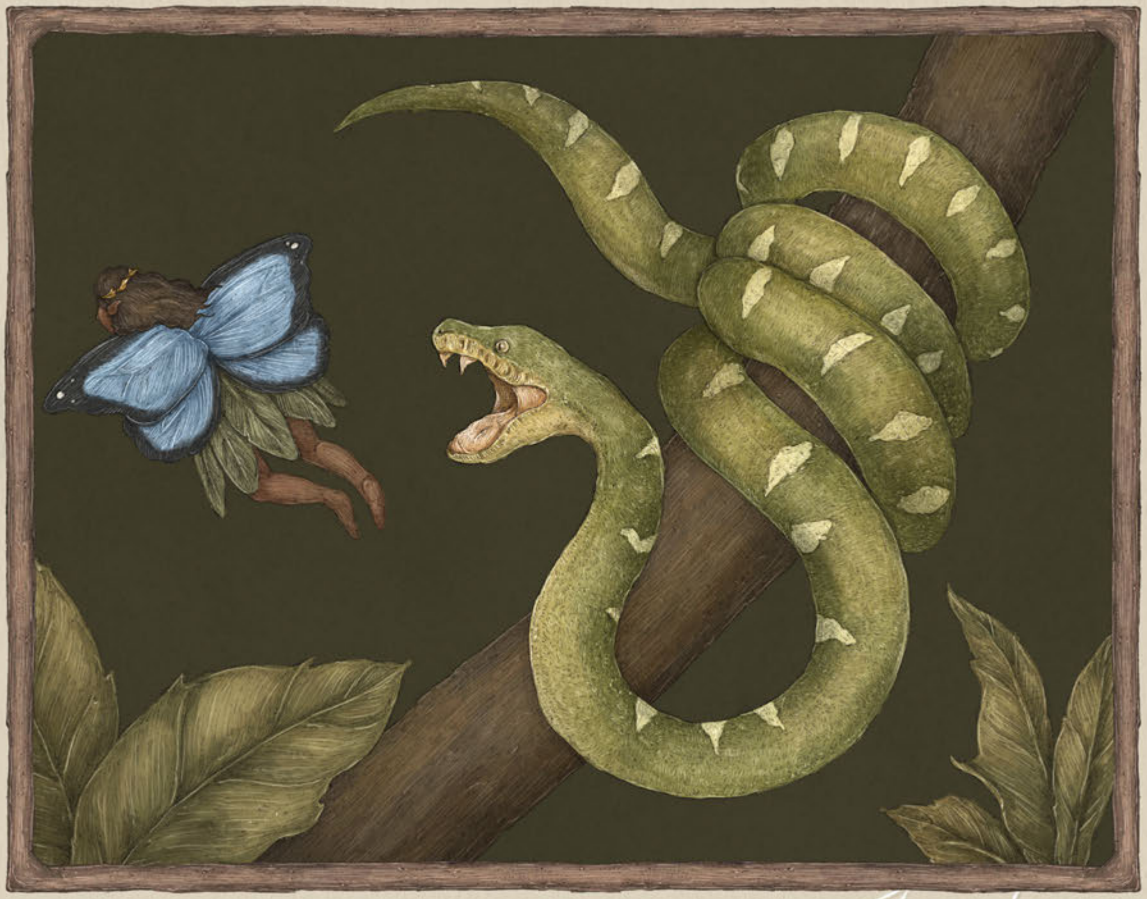
The birch fairy is an expert at concealing itself from the piercing gaze of the barn owl.

Mischievous Animals

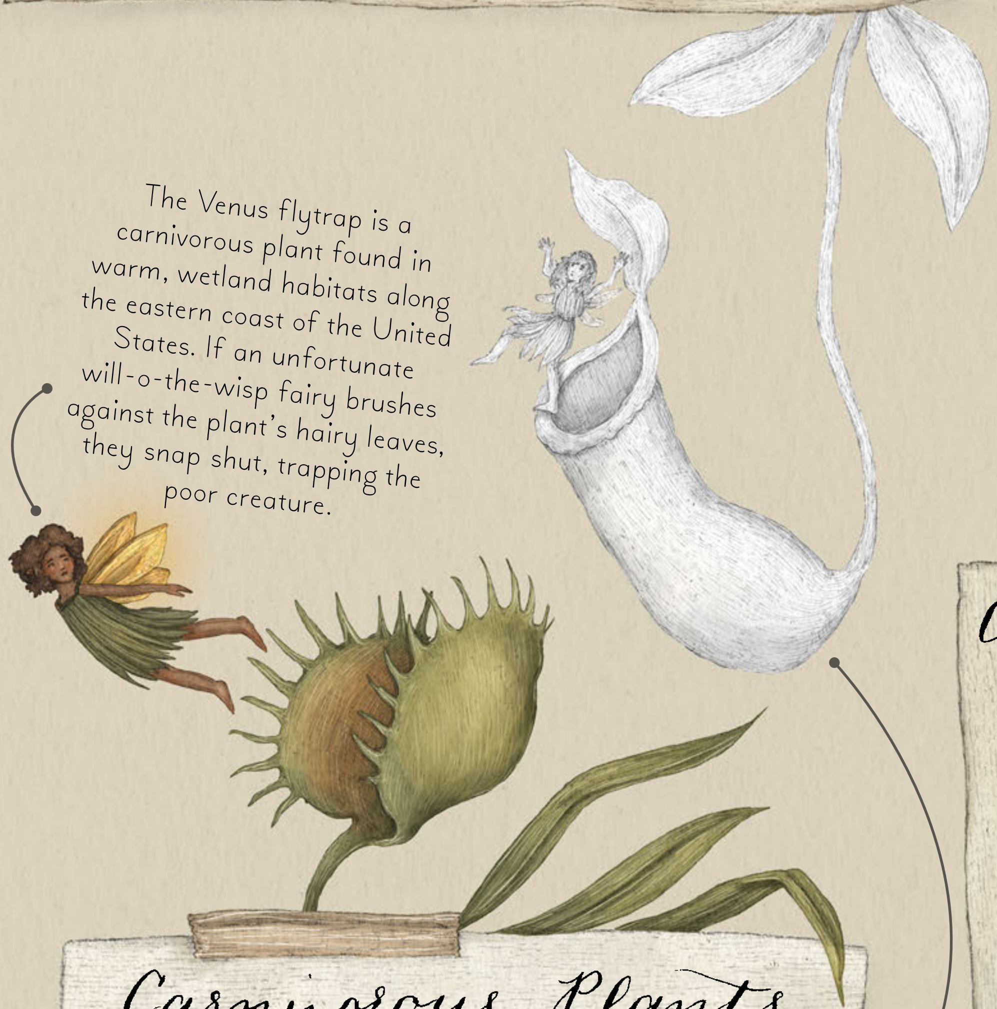
It is not just meat-eating birds and predatory snakes that threaten fairies… they also have to be on the lookout for hungry mammals. In the British Isles, stoats, weasels and foxes prove fierce opponents, while fairies in the Alps might fall prey to wolves or wildcats. Australian fairies have to watch out for aggressive dingoes, while particular dangers in North America include raccoons and wolverines.

Snakes

In some habitats, especially jungles, snakes pose a very real threat to fairies. In the depths of the Amazon, the most deadly enemy of the beautiful rainforest nymph is the emerald tree boa. This bright green snake can grow to nearly two metres long. It lies coiled among the branches, then springs out to snare prey with its fearsome fangs. Fortunately, rainforest nymphs have lightning-fast reactions, so they are often able to escape unscathed.



The Venus flytrap is a carnivorous plant found in warm, wetland habitats along the eastern coast of the United States. If an unfortunate will-o-the-wisp fairy brushes against the plant's hairy leaves, they snap shut, trapping the poor creature.

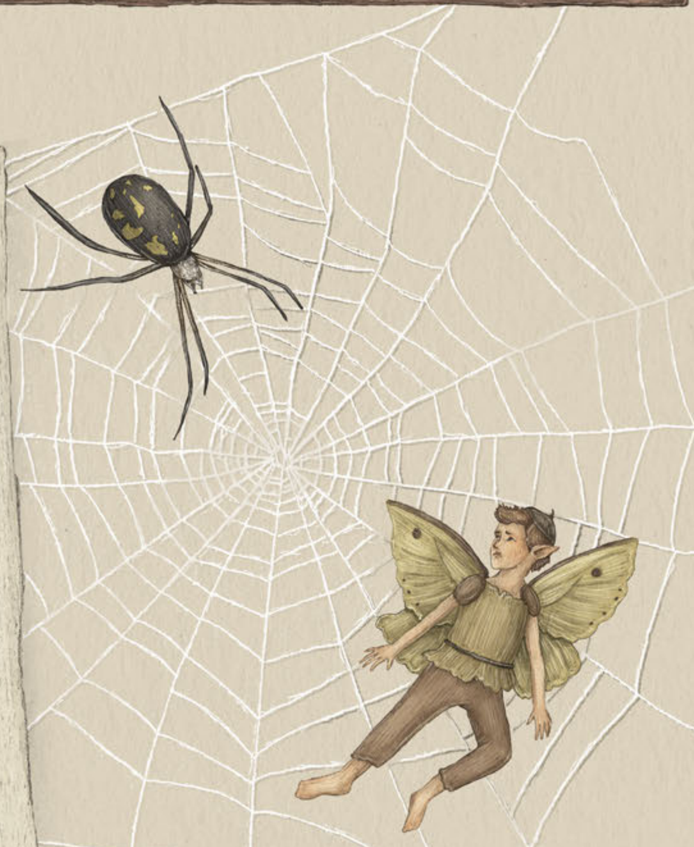


Carnivorous Plants

Next time you are in the jungles of Indonesia, make sure you peek inside the cups of any pitcher plants you pass. You may come face to face with an irate pygmy fairy. Pitcher plants use nectar to lure insects and other prey to their slippery rims. If these creatures tumble into the pitcher, they are slowly turned into soup for the plant.

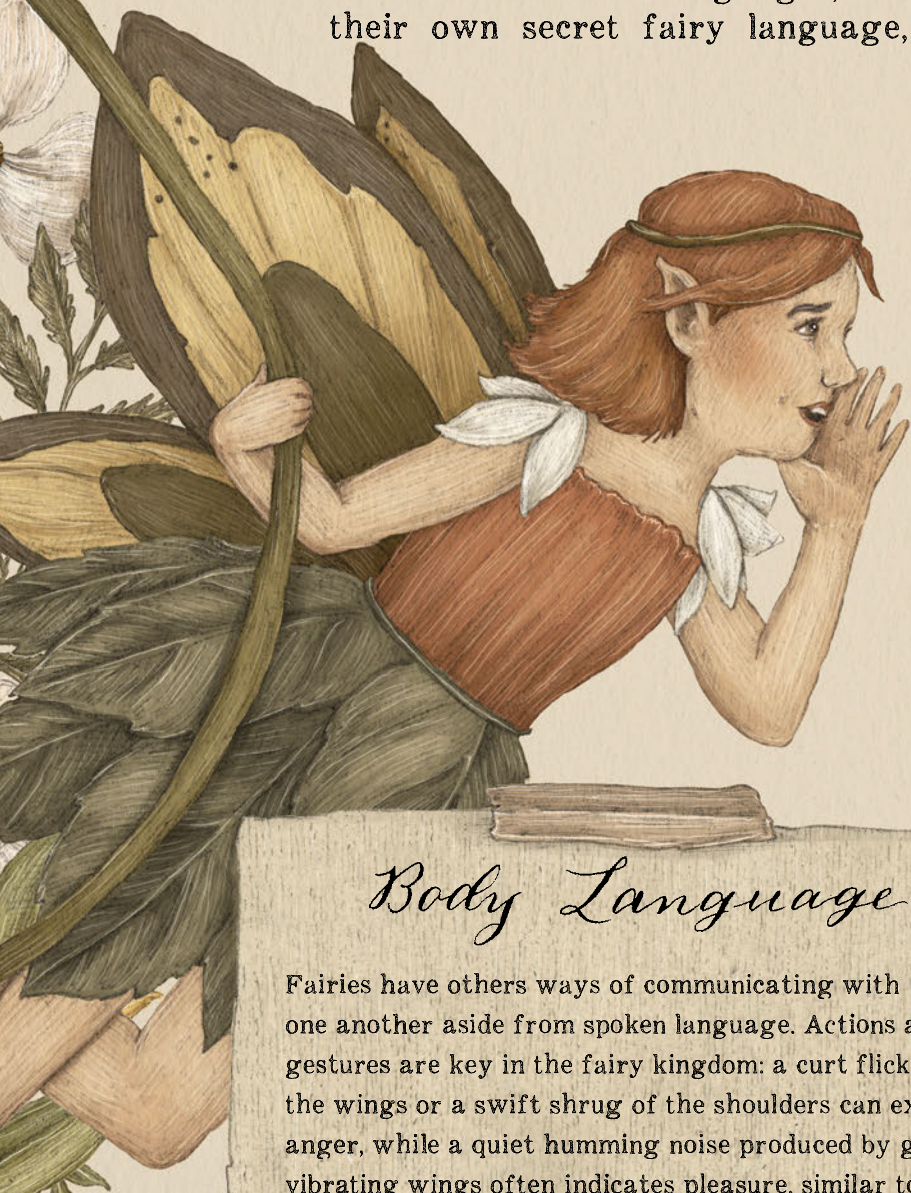
Creepy Crawlies

It is a sad fact that some species of wasp prey on fairy flutterpillars, carrying them off to their nests. In rainforest habitats, fairies may fall victim to swarms of marauding army ants, or could attract the attention of a praying mantis: one of the insect world's most feared predators. Fairies must also be on their guard against spiders. Spider webs are common hazards: any fairy not paying attention while flying may end up snared in a silky embrace, about to become a spider's supper.



FAIRY LANGUAGE AND SECRET SCRIPTS

You may be curious to learn how fairies communicate with each other. Do they use human languages, do they speak their own secret fairy language, or do they interact in other ways? Just like humans and other animals, fairies have various methods of making themselves understood, from speaking, whistling and calling to writing.

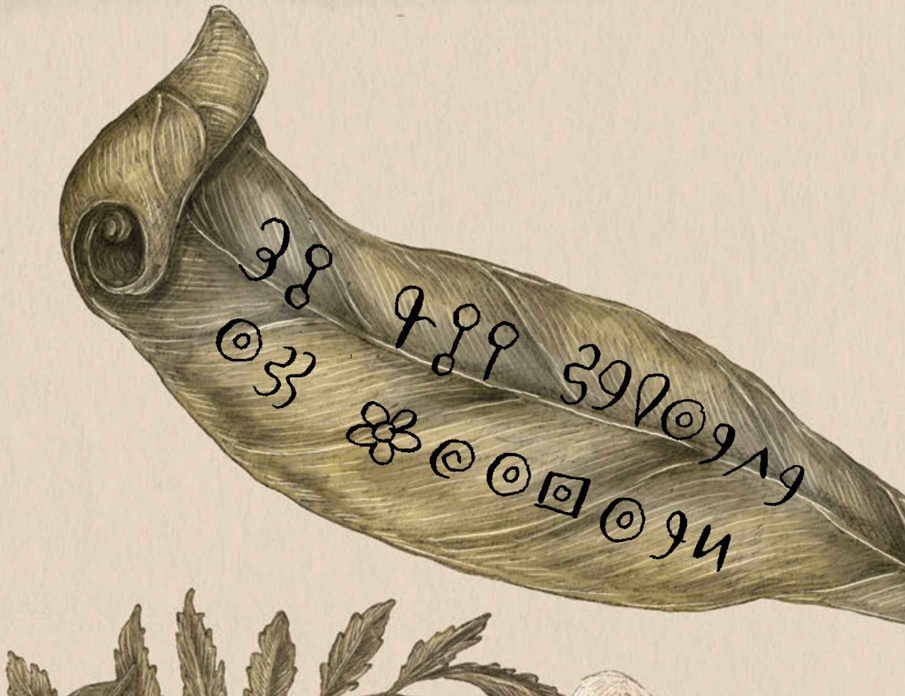


Fairy Speech

Whenever I am searching for fairies in the wild, I begin by simply listening. Often, the chattering of our winged friends can easily be mistaken for birdsong, and only a very experienced listener can single out the high-pitched chirrups that belong to fairies. However, although I can identify fairy language when I hear it, I have sadly not yet been able to understand their speech. I would venture that different species of fairy around the world speak different languages. Some sound like tinkling music, while others resemble the jabbering of a busy colony of birds.

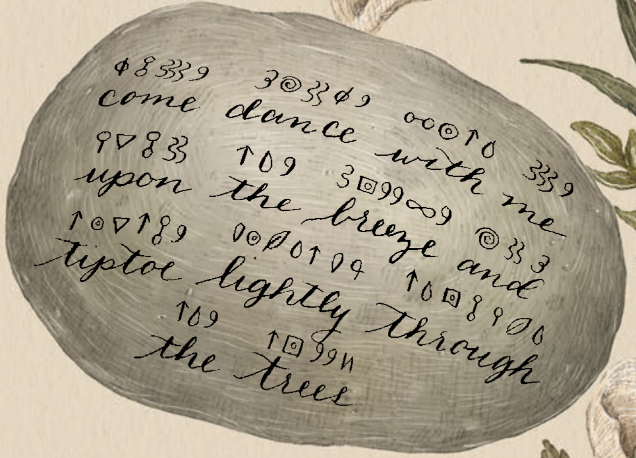
Body Language

Fairies have others ways of communicating with one another aside from spoken language. Actions and gestures are key in the fairy kingdom: a curt flick of the wings or a swift shrug of the shoulders can express anger, while a quiet humming noise produced by gently vibrating wings often indicates pleasure, similar to purring in a cat.



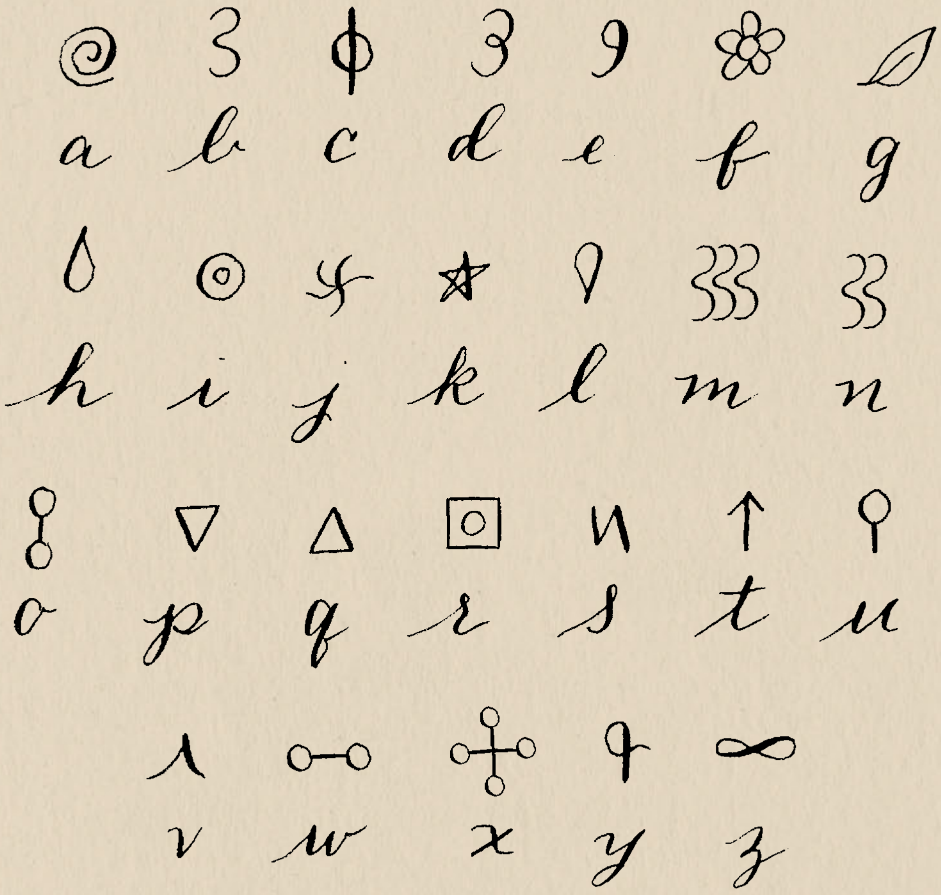
Letter Writers

Remarkably, it appears that in some instances, fairies have even managed to learn human languages. How else do we explain the miniature letters that now and again appear under children's pillows when they lose a tooth? However, I believe fairies use human languages only in their written forms – so far, I have not heard any fairies actually speaking any recognisable human dialects.



The Fairy Alphabet

During the course of my studies, I have occasionally discovered tiny symbols scratched onto tree bark or scrawled across leaves. Although I guessed these symbols had been placed there by fairies, for many years I was unable to decipher their meanings. But one afternoon, as I was digging in my vegetable patch, I unearthed a large, smooth pebble that changed everything. On this pebble were etched a series of tiny symbols in fairy script, and beneath them was carved a phrase in English. Looking more closely, I realised that the English words were a translation of the fairy script. This single pebble was the key to unlocking the secrets of fairy writing!



Using the stone as my guide, I was able to decode the fairy alphabet.

A GUIDE TO FINDING FAIRIES

It is my great hope that this book will have provided all the information you need to identify fairies and to understand their place in the natural world. All you need to do now is find them! Most adults are so distracted by the busyness of daily life that they cannot see fairies. They simply never take the time to look. It is a fact that children are much better at finding our little friends than adults. When fairy-spotting, it is important to spend time outside, amongst nature. It's not surprising that the few adults who do come across fairies are often farmers or woodsmen, who work in fairies' natural habitats. If you slow down, open your eyes and look at the beauty around you, you will find them.

Fairy Finding Tips

Above all, don't rush. Take your time, tread softly and keep your voice low. Spend a while sitting still, quietly watching. To find fairies, you must open your eyes and your mind: you'll only see fairies if you believe they are there.

The best times of day to go searching are at dawn and dusk. It is during these in-between moments, when it is not quite day and not quite night, that the fairies often go about their business. Midsummer's Eve is a particularly good time for fairy-spotting, as the long hours of daylight mean that many species are active until late.

As we have seen, fairies live in all sorts of habitats, so you can look for them in numerous places: in gardens, parks, meadows and woodlands; by riverbanks and streams. If you do find a fairy, don't try to touch it or catch it – just enjoy watching it, while it stays. And when the time comes to depart, remember to leave everything just as you found it. As the saying goes, take only memories, leave only footprints.

Look For…

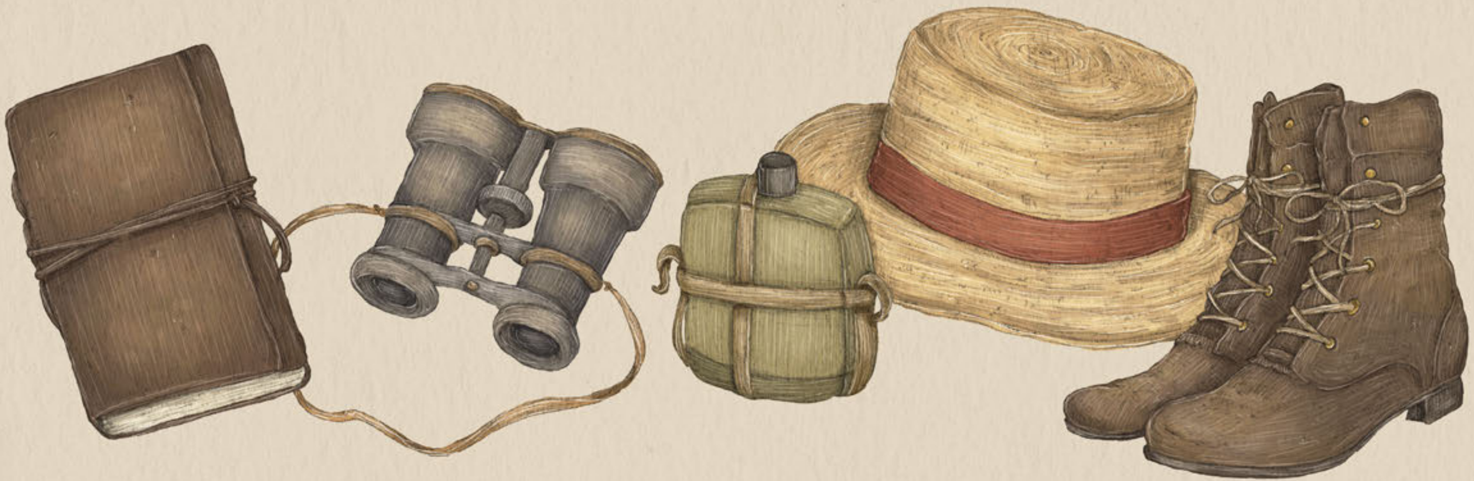
- Tiny footprints
- Fairy eggs laid on leaves
- Discarded flutterpillar cocoons
- Sprinklings of fairy dust around the base of plants
- Butterflies (fairies often fly alongside them)
- Broken nutshells
- Glowing lights (some species are bioluminescent)
- Hollows in a tree trunk, which may be used as fairy homes
- Tiny burrows in the ground
- Miniature nests
- Fairy symbols carved on trees or stones

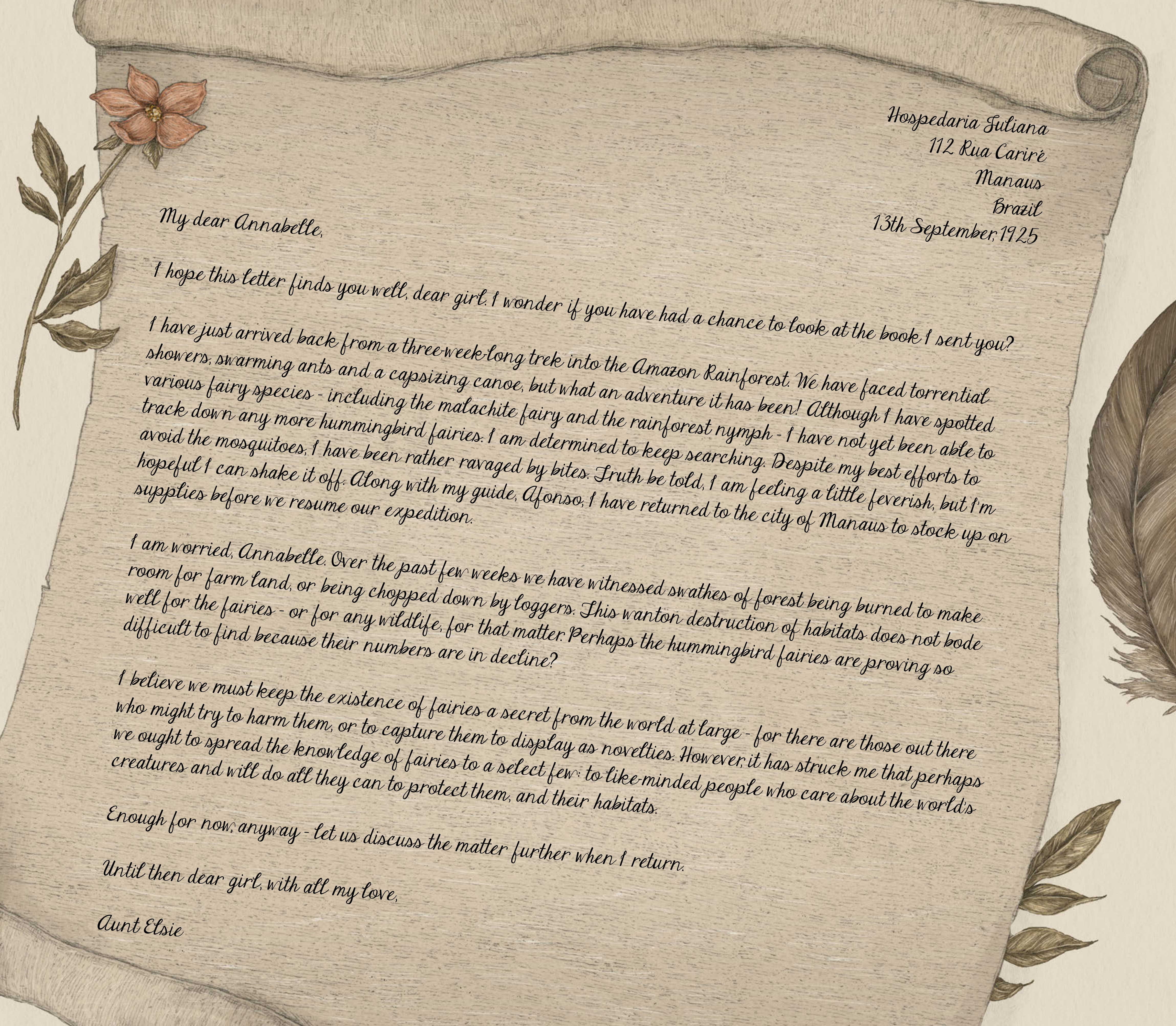
Listen For…

- Birdsong (it may actually be the chattering of fairies)
- Light, delicate voices
- Snatches of tinkling laughter
- The beating of fairy wings
- Clicks and whistles
- Chirping 'crickets' (this sound may be made by male fairies rubbing their wings together)
- Scurrying and rustling in the undergrowth

Useful Fairy-Finding Equipment

- A camera (to document your finds)
- A notebook (to record the species seen)
- A sturdy hat (in case antisocial fairies shower nuts upon you)
- Magnifying glass (to look for fairy eggs)
- Map of the area
- Binoculars
- Water flask
- Sturdy boots





Hospedaria Juliana
112 Rua Cariré
Manaus
Brazil
13th September, 1925

My dear Annabelle,

I hope this letter finds you well, dear girl. I wonder if you have had a chance to look at the book I sent you?

I have just arrived back from a three-week-long trek into the Amazon Rainforest. We have faced torrential showers, swarming ants and a capsizing canoe, but what an adventure it has been! Although I have spotted various fairy species - including the malachite fairy and the rainforest nymph - I have not yet been able to track down any more hummingbird fairies. I am determined to keep searching. Despite my best efforts to avoid the mosquitoes, I have been rather ravaged by bites. Truth be told, I am feeling a little feverish, but I'm hopeful I can shake it off. Along with my guide, Afonso, I have returned to the city of Manaus to stock up on supplies before we resume our expedition.

I am worried, Annabelle. Over the past few weeks we have witnessed swathes of forest being burned to make room for farm land, or being chopped down by loggers. This wanton destruction of habitats does not bode well for the fairies - or for any wildlife, for that matter. Perhaps the hummingbird fairies are proving so difficult to find because their numbers are in decline?

I believe we must keep the existence of fairies a secret from the world at large - for there are those out there who might try to harm them, or to capture them to display as novelties. However, it has struck me that perhaps we ought to spread the knowledge of fairies to a select few: to like-minded people who care about the world's creatures and will do all they can to protect them, and their habitats.

Enough for now, anyway - let us discuss the matter further when I return.

Until then dear girl, with all my love,

Aunt Elsie

For Mandy, of course, and for Rachel –
thank you for planting the seed.

And for my patient, generous, genius Mum
– thank you for everything.

And, last but by no means least… for
Joanie and Tess, my mayblossom fairy
and holly blue, thank you for your
wonderful fairy fact-checking!

-E.H.

For my mom and dad, Muriel and
Richard. Thank you for always
encouraging my interest in art and books.

-J.R.

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